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ABSTRACT

A guide for independent learners of Maniyaka (also known as Mandingo), one of the Mande languages of Liberia, is intended for individuals already in a Mandingo speaking situation but without access to experienced teachers of the language. An introductory chapter discusses the languages of Liberia and provides a map of Liberian languages, a chart of the interrelationships of the languages, and lists of some Indo-European and West African language word correspondences. The two subsequent chapters outline how to learn a Mande language through independent study and instructions to tutors of the language. The fourth and fifth chapters provide a reference grammar of Mandingo and a Mandingo-English dictionary. The final chapter outlines in detail the Mande language sound system (vowels, consonants, and supprasegmentals and gives a series of listening and transcription exercises for a variety of phonetic structures. (MSE)

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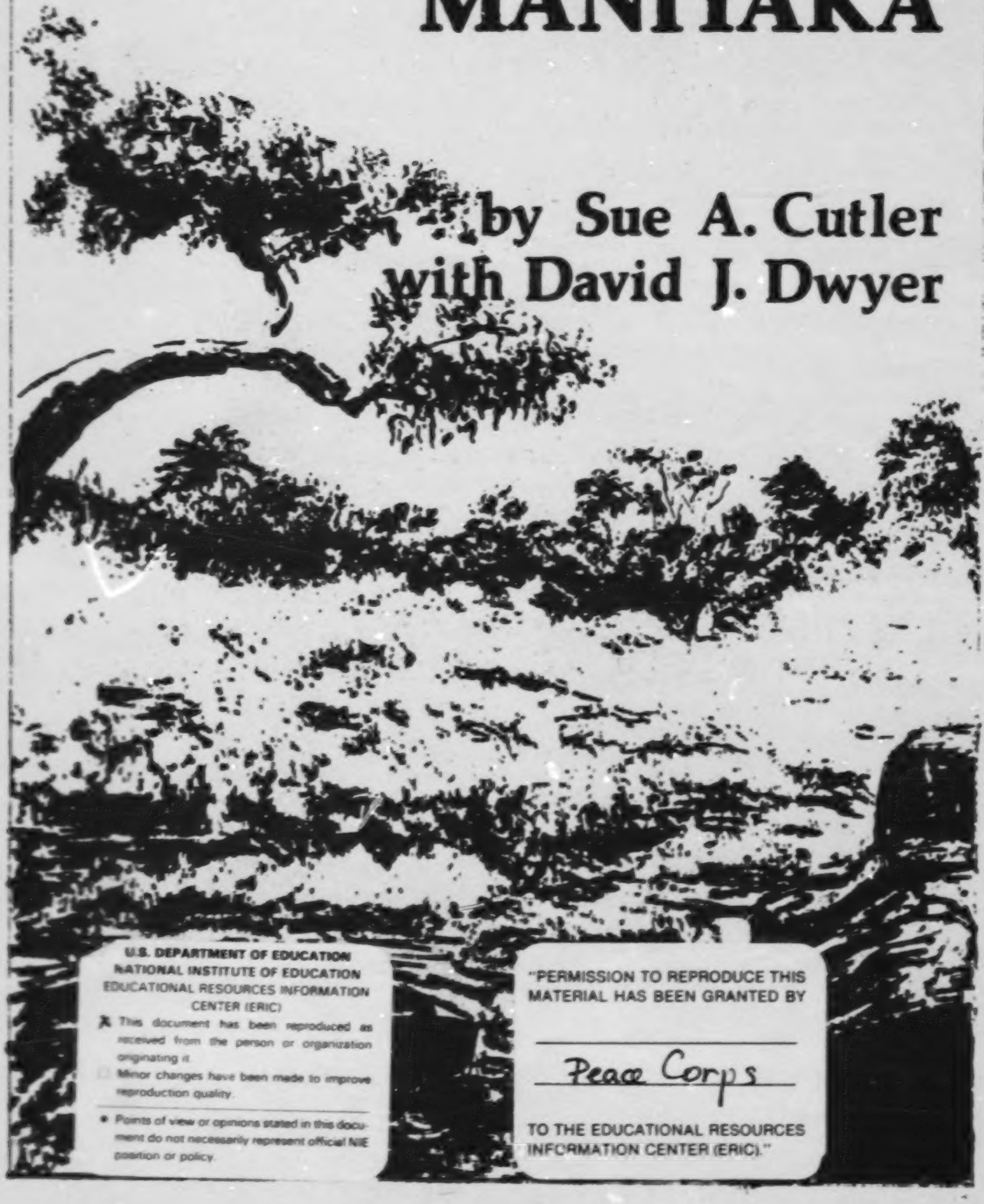
A Reference Handbook of
MÃNIYAKÃ

by Sue A. Cutler
with David J. Dwyer



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MÃNIYAKÃ

A Reference Handbook

of

PHONETICS, GRAMMAR, LEXICON

AND

LEARNING PROCEDURES

by

Sue A. Cutler

with

David J. Dwyer

for

THE UNITED STATES PEACE CORPS

at

THE AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER

of

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

1981

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INTRODUCTION

Most language textbooks are written with a presumption that the language would be taught under the auspices of a trained and experienced language teacher. And while this situation does prevail in the teaching of European languages, such is not the case with the lesser-known languages of the third world, particularly outside the walls of higher learning.

In the learning of African languages, it is more frequently the case that language teachers are untrained (owing to the minimal demand for such teachers) or that the learning situation is outside the classroom. Although I have no access to statistics, my impression of Peace Corps language training is such that even with 100-200 hours of language training, the learner will need additional study before being able to use the language with any facility.

Thus, it is the reality that much of the learning of African languages will inevitably take place outside the classroom in situations that are in some ways ideal, but which lack an experienced language tutor. It is this reality that gives rise to this volume for it was written for the learner who has the commitment to further his/her language study, but who lacks the general knowledge of how to proceed. It is the purpose then to give the learner the sufficient skills and knowledge to be able to carry out the orderly study of a foreign language on his/her own.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE LANGUAGES OF LIBERIA

In addition to English, which is widely spoken in Liberia, there are three major groups of languages spoken there: West Atlantic, Kru and Mande, all of which are subdivisions of the Niger-Congo branch of Niger-Kordafanian, the largest grouping of languages in Africa (see figure 1).

The Kru languages, spoken in both southern Liberia and the western part of the Ivory Coast, include the following Liberian languages: Krahn, Bassa, Kru, Grebo, Dei and Kuwaa (also known as Belleh). The West Atlantic languages are spoken from Liberia north to Senegal and include the Gola and Kissi, spoken in the northwestern and northern parts of Liberia respectively. These languages are virtually surrounded by languages of the third group known as the Mande languages. This group covers a much larger area than the other two, including not only the above-mentioned countries, but Guinea, Upper Volta and Mali as well.

The Mande languages have a Western branch and a (South)eastern branch. Mano and Gio (hard g) are Southeastern Mande languages spoken in Nimba county. The Western branch has two sub-branches, Northwestern and Southwestern. Both Vai, spoken in the Cape Mount area, and Manya (also known as Mandingo) spoken in the border area between Guinea and Liberia are Liberian languages of the northern branch. The other branch contains a set of very closely related languages called the Southwestern Mande languages of which only Loko is spoken outside of Liberia, in Sierra Leone. The rest, Mende, Bandi, Kpelle and Lorma are spoken in the northern part of Liberia.

The location of the Mande languages in Africa is shown in figure 1, the location of the languages of Liberia is shown in figure 2, and figure 3 shows how these languages are related.

FIGURE 1: THE DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

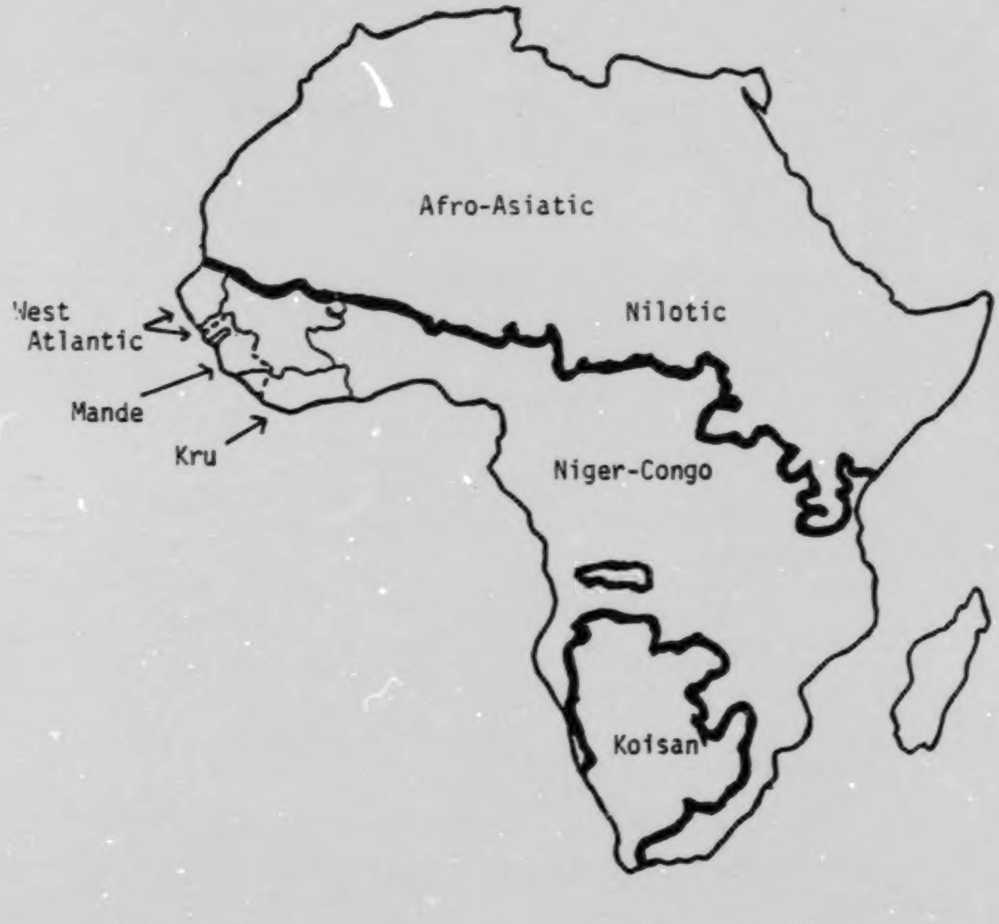
Afro-Asiatic
West Atlantic
Nilotic
Mande
Kru
Niger-Congo
Koisan

FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF LIBERIAN LANGUAGES

(from Liberia in Maps, von Gnielinski (ed. 1972)

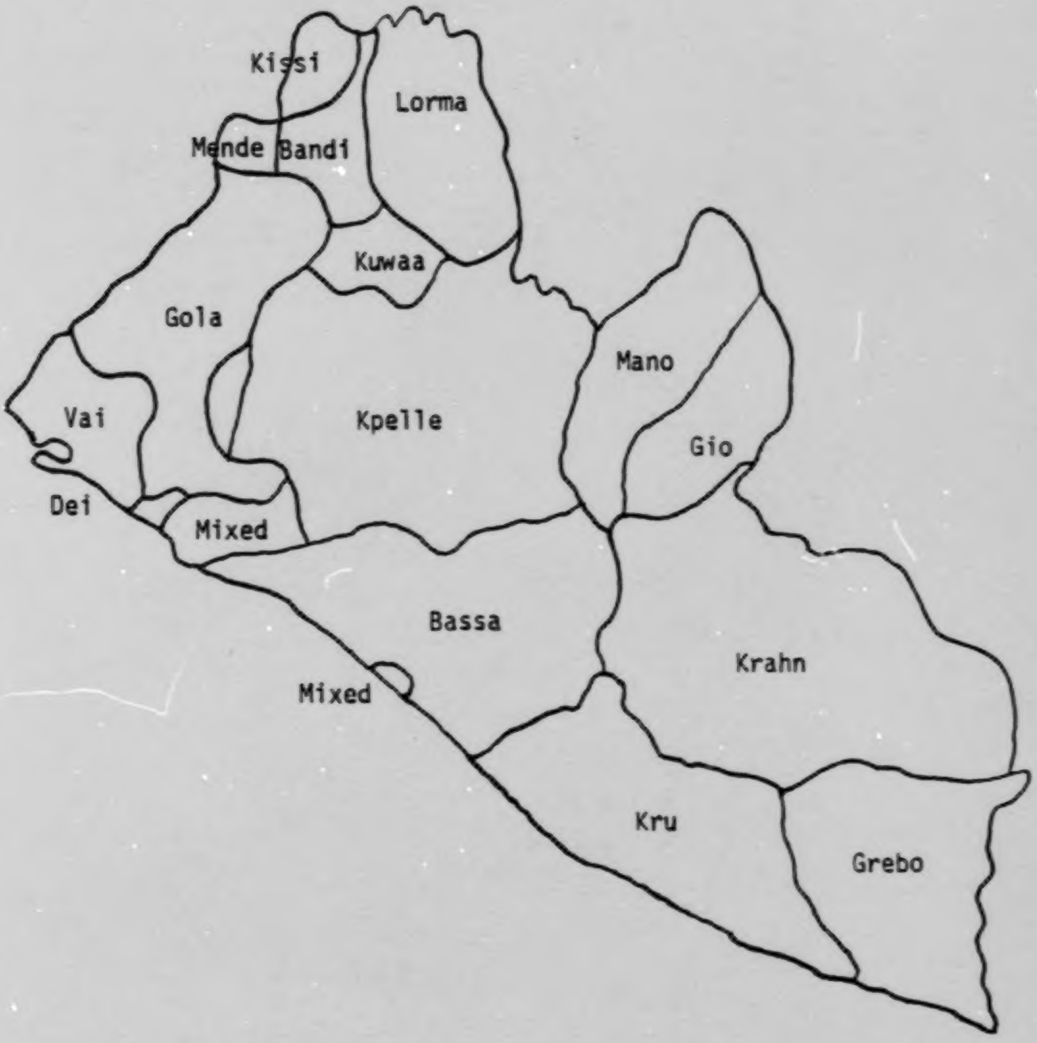
Kissi
Lorma
Mende
Bandi
Kuwaa
Gola
Mano
Vai
Kpelle
Gio
Dei
Mixed
Bassa
Krahn
Mixed
Kru
Grebo

FIGURE 3: THE RELATEDNESS OF THE LIBERIAN LANGUAGES

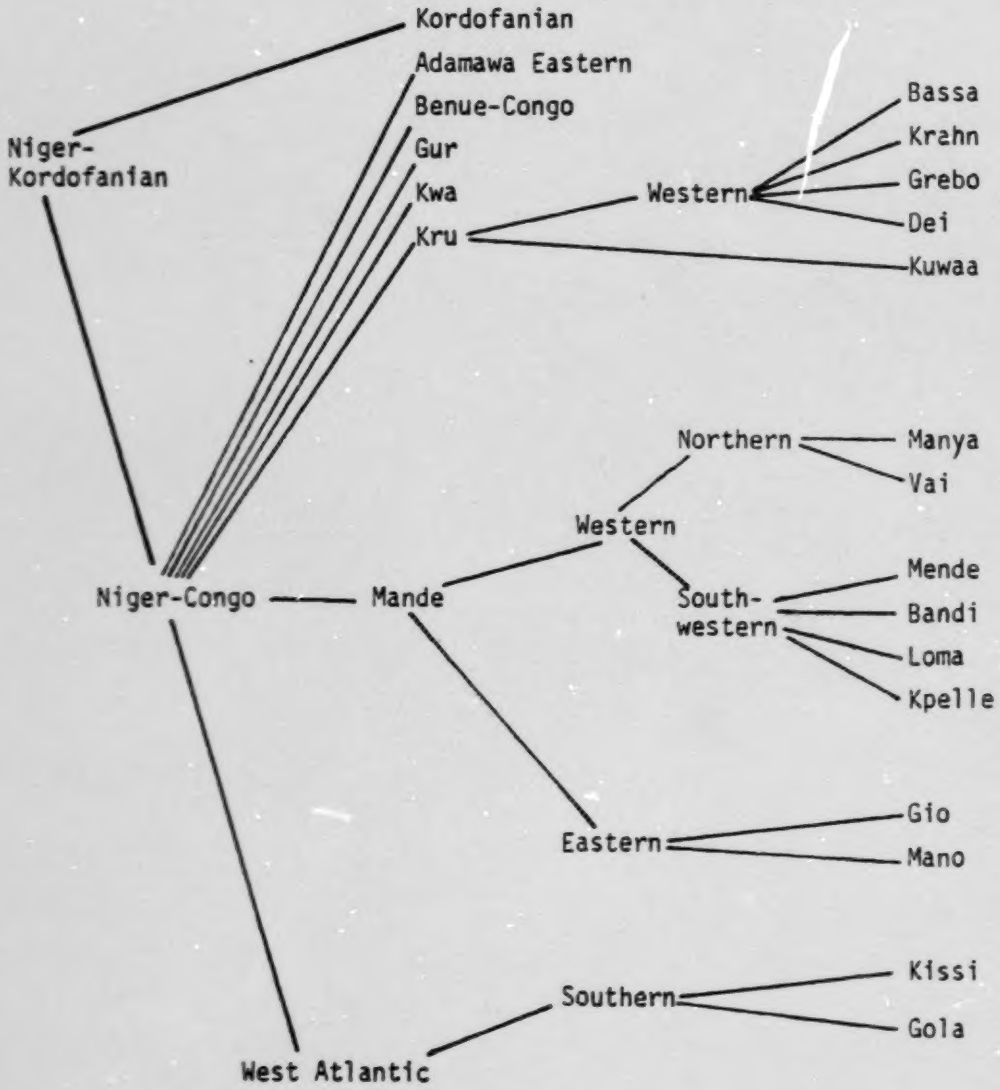
Kordofanian
Adamawa Eastern
Benue-Congo
Gur
Kwa
Kru
Niger-Kordofanian
Western
Bassa
Krahn
Grebo
Dei
Kuwaa
Northern
Manya
Vai
Western
Niger-Congo
Mande
South-western
Mende
Bandi
Loma
Kpelle
Eastern
Gio
Mano
Southern
Kissi
Gola
West Atlantic

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FIGURE (4A)

Indo-European correspondences from Greenberg (1957:42)

LANGUAGE	ONE	TWO	THREE	HEAD	EYE	EAR	NOSE	MOUTH	TOOTH
Breton	ünan	dau	tri	penn	lagad	skuarn	fri	genu	dant
Irish	ŏ:n	dɔ:	tri	kjan	su:lj	kluəs	sre:n	bjal	fjakalj
Welsh	in	daɨ	tri	pen	blagad	klist	truin	keg	dant
Danish	en	to:ʔ	tre:ʔ	ho:dhə	ajə	o:rə	nä:sə	monʔ	tanʔ
Swedish	en	tvo	tre	hüvud	ŏga	ŏra	näsa	mun	tand
Dutch	e:n	tve:	dri:	ho:ft	o:x	o:r	nö:s	mont	tant
English	wən	tuw	θrij	hed	aj	ihr	nowz	mawθ	tuwθ
German	ajns	tsvaj	draj	kopf	augə	o:r	na:ze	munt	tsa:n
French	œ̃, yn	dö	trwa	tɛ:t	œ̃l/jö	orɛ:j	ne	buuš	dã
Italian	uno, una	due	tre	tɛsta	ɔkkjo	orekkjo	naso	bokka	dɛnte
Spanish	un, una	dos	tres	kabesa	oxo	orexa	naso	boka	diɛnte
Rumanian	un	doj	trej	kap	okju	ureke	nas	gurə	dinte
Albanian	n'ə	du	tre	kokɔ	sü	vesh	hundə	goja	dbəmɔ
Greek	enas	dhjo	tris	kefáli	máti	aftí	míti	stóma	dbóndi
Lithuanian	vienas	du	tris	galva	akis	ausis	nosis	burna	dantis
Latvian	viens	divi	tri:s	galva	atss	auss	deguns	mute	zobs
Polish	jeden	dva	tši	ŋlova	oko	uxo	nos	usta, gěba	zöp
Czech	jeden	dva	tri	hlava	oko	uxo	nos	usta	zup
Russian	adjin	dva, dvje	trji	galava	oko	uxo	nos	rot	zup
Bulgarian	edin	dva	tri	glava	oko	uxo	nos	usta	zəb
Serbo-Croatian	jedan	dva	tri	glava	oko	Uhɔ	nos̨	usta	zub
Finnish	üksi	kaksi	kolme	pa:	sihnä	korva	nenä	su:	hammas
Estonian	üks	kaks	kolm	pea	silm	wilja-pea	nina	su:	hammas
Hungarian	ed	ke:t	ha:rom	fÜ:, fej	sem	fül	orr	sa:j	fog
Basque	bat	bi	hirÜr	bÜrÜ	begi	belari	südÜr	aho	orts

FIGURE (4B)

Some West African Language Correspondences

LANGUAGE	ONE	TWO	THREE	EAR	EYE	MOUTH	TOOTH	HEAD	NOSE
Fulbe	do	ɗiɗi	tati	nofru	yitere	hunnuko	nyiire	hoorɛ	kinal
Biafada	numa	bihe	biivo	nufa	-girɛ	musu	keede	gaga	-sini
Themne	-in	rɛŋ	-sas	lens	-fɔr	-seŋ	-sek	-bump	sot
Limba	funte	taae	tatat	ifa	-ifa	-foti	tiiti	kafa	peren
Kissi	pelɛɛ	miÜÜ	ŋgaa	nilen	-ifɔ	sondoo	kinde	bolɛɛŋ	milindo
Bullom	bul	tin	ra	niu	-hɔl	nyɔhɔl	chaŋ	-bol	-min
Gola	gun	tiel	taal	kenu	efɛ	onya	kesĩa	edi	əmia
Bambara	kileŋ	fila	saba	tulo	nyiŋ	da	nyiŋ	kuŋ	nun
Dyula	kelẽ	fla	saba	toro	nyadɛn	da	nyi		nun
Kuranko	gɛlɛn	fla	sawa	tule	ye	de	namen		
Manyakan	kɛlɛ̃	fila	sawa	tolo	nya	da	nyi	kÜ	nũ
Kono	ŋkele	fela	sawa	toro	ya	daa	ŋirɛ	kun	nun
Vai	dondo	fela	sagba	tolo	ja	da	nyiŋ	kun	suŋ
Sosso	kedeŋ	firiŋ	saxaŋ	tuli	yẹẹ	dɛ	nyinni	xÜ	noɛm
Loko	ngila	fele	sawa	ŋguo	ŋgau	nda	ngongɔu	ngu	hokpa
Mende	ita	fele	sawa	ŋgoli	ngahÜ	ndo	ngongolu	ngu	hokpa
Bandi	ngila	fele	sawa	ŋgoli	ŋgasÜ	nda	ngongolu	ngu	sokpa
Lorma	gila	felegɔ	saagɔ	goi	gaazuvɛ	daa	niin	wun	sokpai
Kpelle	tɔnɔ	feerɛ	saaba	woli	ŋei	la	nyiŋ	ŋÜŋ	sÜa
Mano	doo	peetɛ	yaaka	too	nyiɛ	le	sɔ̃	wÜkele	nyu
Dan	dɔ	pira	yaka	tu	nyaga	di	sÜ	goga	nyÜ
We	dɔ	pire	yaka	turu	nyawe	le-bo	so	wun	ne
Nwe	dɔ	pilɔ	a	pe	lon	laga	sɔ	me	nye
Mwa	do	ple	yaga	trona	yirebe	di	so	moru	nyi
Bē	do	plao	ŋgaõ	turun	yowore	ye	so	mwunu	nye
Guro	du	fia	yaa	tone	yÜe	le	sÜe	mbɔ	mi
Bisa	dinne	hira	karko	tur	yer	le	sɔ	min	mii
Bobo Fing	tele	pla	saxa	turu	nyono	do	nyini	ŋwon	bi
Dei	boo	sõõ	tãã	lɔɔ	gire	ŋuɛɛn	ŋirɛ	duru	ŋerĩ
Bassa	do	sõõ	tãã	lɔ̃	gire	uŋo	ŋirɛ	tru	ŋòlã
Guere	doo	sõõ	tã	nɔgu	gie	ŋuɔ	nye	debo	ŋera
Grebo	do	so̱	tã	nuuã	yiie	uunɔ	nye	lu	ŋla
Kuwaa	dee	sɔ̃ɔ̃	tãã	nɔi	sĩ	wɔ̃	kala	wulu	nyu
Akan-Twi	baako	abieŋ	abiɛsa	aso	ani	ano	ɛso	eti	ehwene
Ga	ekome	enyɔ	etɛ̃	toi	hiŋmɛi	daa	nɔ	yitso	gugɔ
Yoruba	eni	eji	ɛta	eti	oju	ɛno	envi	oli	imu

Invariably, the question of language versus dialect arises in the discussion of African languages, as in the phrase "he spoke an African dialect." The implication of this phrase is of course that there is but one African language. If we draw the recognized distinction between language and dialect, that of mutual intelligibility (if you can't understand the speech of someone, he is speaking a language different from your own, while if you can, it is a dialect of your own language) then the notion of dialect discussed earlier is quite wrong. By the above definition, Africa has somewhere between 1000 - 1500 distinct languages (estimates vary). Many of these languages also have several dialectal variants. At least four distinct dialects have been identified for Kpelle and for Lorma.

Although we may have resolved the problem of dialect, the reader may still be wondering just how closely these languages are related and in what ways they are related. The answer to this question is unfortunately quite complicated so that in the following paragraphs only a partial answer can be given.

To begin with, languages can be compared on the basis of their sound systems, their syntax, their vocabulary and their meaning (see Chapter II for definitions). The most common way to compare languages is to compare how two or more languages will represent a given word. As a general rule, the more basic words two languages have in common, the more closely the two languages are related. Figure 4 shows a comparison of some common words in European languages and in some of the languages in West Africa.

One of the assumptions behind the comparison of figure 4 and the chart in figure 3 is that of divergent development. At one time there was a single group of people who later separated into two or more groups. Once isolated, the language of the two groups developed in different ways until finally after a long period of time, they were no longer mutually intelligible. Presumably, this process has continued repeatedly and is the primary explanation for the degree of linguistic diversity in Africa today.

Yet in addition to divergence, there is also convergent development, that of two different languages becoming more similar as a result of contact and commercial intercourse. It is possible to find two distinct language groups living together, sharing not only similar words, but turns of expression and cultural items. Thus with both the processes of convergence and divergence the precise relation of any one language to another may prove to be extremely complex, much more so at least than figure 3 would have you believe.

CHAPTER II

HOW TO STUDY A MANDE LANGUAGE ON YOUR OWN

1. Introduction

People have been learning foreign languages for centuries both with formal instruction and without. This fact is at least encouraging, though at this point, history has revealed no outstanding method or approach to language learning. Here in Zorzor, I know some high school students who are studying French in school...they are getting nowhere, at the same time, there are high school students who came from other parts of Liberia who learn Lorma within a year outside their daily academic studies.

This anecdote suggests two things, 1) a formal approach does not guarantee learning and 2) an informal approach does not necessarily inhibit it. Furthermore, most efforts to determine what is the most effective method to learn language have usually concluded that the most crucial differences in classroom effectiveness center around the quality of teacher, the organization of classroom procedures and learner interest and discipline. The method involved has rarely been deemed significant.

What this evidence means is that crucial to learning a language is a well-organized learning procedure (no matter what method is involved) and hard work; the more you work, the more you learn (within reason).

What this also means is that any method can be used to learn. Nevertheless it is important that the learner be aware of the variety of these approaches and their implications.

2. Aspects of Language Learning to Consider

If you have ever studied a foreign language before, you probably encountered most of the following situations:

(a) You know what you want to say, but you don't know how to say it either because you don't know the word or how to use it;

(b) Two or three words sound alike, but have very different meanings;

(c) You figured out how to ask the question, but couldn't begin to comprehend the answer;

(d) You said something that you thought was appropriate and everybody laughed.

All of these problems are real, and represent different aspects of language learning that you need to know about.

The first problem points out that there are two modes of meaning in language: that found in words, and that found in the relationship between words. These two modes of meaning are more formally called vocabulary and syntax.

The second problem is another system, the means by which these modes of meaning are signaled. This sytem, more formally termed the sound or phonological system, concerns the contrastive sounds used by the language.

The third problem concerns an overemphasis on the production of sentences and an underemphasis on the comprehension of sentences.

The fourth problem concerns the social context in which the language is embedded, that is, what you said was technically correct in terms of (a) and (b) above, but appeared out of context. Your comment could have been humorous for any of the following reasons:

(a) Thus it was correct, but not expected. That is, since so few foreigners say the right thing at the right time in the right way that the very correctness of the response is out of context.

(b) Your comment may have been correct, but inappropriate, that is, in the specific context, another comment is required. You would no more think of greeting people at a funeral with "hi there" than you would of showing up in a bathing suit.

(c) Your comment may have been humorous for other reasons as well. It may have been correct, but carried an additional meaning. In French if you say you are full rather than satisfied you mean that you are pregnant...a strange thing to say after a fine meal, particularly for a male. When you are in the process of learning the vocabulary and syntax of a language, you can expect some surprisingly humorous developments.

(d) Your comment may have meant something other than intended. In The Lonely African by Colin Turnbull, one missionary is credited with saying "your bottom" rather than "good morning" because the user failed to make a tone distinction. This kind of error is normal when learning the sound system of the language.

For Lorma speakers learning English, the pronunciation of final consonants (the consonants at the end of words) are a problem. One of the general strategies which speakers use is that "when in doubt add an l." Thus I have heard will for way. But for good humor dead bottle for dead body (John Singler, personal communication) is supreme. Let's face it, these things are funny and the best way to deal with them is to laugh. together. You may as well, for you are certain to be next if you are serious about learning a Liberian language.

These differences may be due to pronunciation, as in the above examples or to the wrong choice of words (malaprops).

These problems then, underscore the aspects of language that you need to know about in order to effectively study language. These can be summarized as 1) the organization of language: vocabulary, syntax, phonology; 2) speaking vrs. listening; and 3) social context (usage).

3. The Organization of Language

Language consists of three subsystems: 1) phonology (the sound system of the language); 2) the lexicon (the vocabulary of the language); and 3) the syntax (the system of putting words together to make sentences). In everyday language, language consists of 1) a set of distinctive sounds, 2) a vocabulary, and 3) a grammar: a set of rules stating how sentences are formed.

3.1 Phonology (the sounds of a language)

Every language has a finite set of distinctive sounds which are used to convey meaning. These sounds are called phonemes. While the inventory of these sounds is not the same from language to language, they are similar enough in most cases not to cause problems. Yet there are inevitably cases, however, where one language makes a distinction which the other doesn't. For some reason, if these distinctions are not part of your native language they will be hard to hear and hard to produce, yet with practice they can both be heard and pronounced giving you the same access to the phonemic distinction that native speakers have. Chapter VI contains sound drills designed to help you learn to hear the differences between those sound contrasts found in Liberian languages, but not in English.

3.2 Lexicon and Syntax (vocabulary and word order)

With the distinction between lexicon and syntax as that of words and their combination into sentences, it is worth while to consider what this means. Meaning in language is of two types, that which is general and systematic, and that which is individual and idiosyncratic. For example, we can say that elephants are big and mice are small or we can say that some elephants and some mice are big for their species, or small for that matter. This way of relating size to different items is general and systematic and can be constructed by relating one word to another, that is it can be expressed syntactically.

But it is also possible to express size in another way as the following sets illustrate:

drop, puddle, pond, lake, sea, ocean
baby, child, youth, adult, aged
pebble, rock, boulder

This usage is idiosyncratic, that is: drop, puddle, etc., are not systematically related to each other in form, but are simply different words. Thus the expression of systematic and general meanings is the domain of syntax while the expression of idiosyncratic meanings is the domain of the lexicon.

3.3 Syntax:

It is important to bear in mind that the division between lexical and syntactic meanings is not exactly the same from language to language though it is nearly so. Nevertheless, we may find one language expressing a notion syntactically whereas the other uses a single word. Below are some examples:

English	Typical Mande
calf:	cow child
to dance:	to do dance
sea:	big water
house:	place where one lives
potash:	bitter salt

Thus in your exposure to a new language, you will find that what you expect to be one word is actually several. One of the nice things about Mande languages is that if you learn that the way to say "worker" is literally "farm-work-do-person" and you know the words for "farm, "work", "do" and "person", you do not have to really learn any new words, only a new combination which turns out to be easier for most people. You can also expect to find words which require several words for translation into English.

4. What Does Language Ability Entail?

Everyone has heard of someone who speaks six or seven languages. The questions that this raises are what does this entail and how did they do it.

4.1 Competence and Performance:

In order to speak a language, you have to have considerable knowledge about the language. You have to know the sound system, though perfect knowledge of it isn't absolutely necessary. You have to know some words and some syntactic rules. The question arises, how many words and how many rules?

The number of words one needs to know varies from language to language because of differences in the way concepts are expressed, whether by syntactic devices, or by word compounding or by having one word covering a wide range of concepts. But by rephrasing the question as "how many concepts are necessary?", the question can at least receive an answer, though to my knowledge little systematic study of this question has been carried out. Rather cautiously, then, I throw out the figure of 1,000 to 2,000 concepts as being necessary to comprehend 90-95% of a conversation. This percentage marks the level at which one can keep up with the general meaning of the discussion.

A language is not just a collection of words but, as we have pointed out, it also contains a syntactic system. This syntactic system consists of a set of rules about how to combine words to make sentences. The answer is that you need to know most of them, something any good language text should present. While the general set of syntactic expressions are fixed, the way they are expressed may be straightforward or complex. Plurals in English are easy, but complex in German. Pronouns in English are straightforward but complex in the Mande languages.

4.2 The Question of User Utility:

It is one thing to talk about the kind of information you need to speak a language and another to talk about how it is actually used. For example we can tell someone about how to do multiplication, which principles are involved. That is, we can say that 6 x 7 is 7 added 6 times. Yet when we ask someone "what is 6 x 7?", the answer will be given in less time than it could possibly take to add seven six times. In doing arithmetic, we found it to our advantage to memorize the individual products rather than calculate them each time we need them. The calculator, on the other hand does just the opposite.

This example is intended to emphasize that simply stating the kind of knowledge that is involved in language does not necessarily mean that this is the form in which this information is used. In language teaching, two positions have been taken. One which might be called a "deductive" approach, and the other an "inductive" approach.

The deductive approach presents the learner with a set of rules to learn. Once these rules are learned, the learner is free to construct sentences. The inductive approach argues the reverse, that if you present the learner with a set of sentences that the learner will figure out the general patterns.

This second approach usually also presumes that there is relatively less to generalize about than the first. That is, what people do in learning a language is to learn a sentence type and develop variants of it by substituting words at various places.

These two views are quite different and presume two different notions of the human mind. The deductive approach presumes that the mind is like a calculator with little memory capacity and prefers therefore to generate new information rather than store it. The inductive approach considers the mind to have a much greater capacity for memory.

In this regard, it is true that the mind has a vast capacity for memory. Think of all the experiences, events, jokes and facts you can recall. Think of the words that are available to you, these number somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 items. What is truely remarkable about this is you can inventory them all within a split second. If I ask you which of the following are English words: "house", "tire", "fleurten", "vice"; you will have no difficulty whatsoever picking out fleurten as the non-English word. In this regard, the human mind is far superior to the computer.

It is this tremendous memory capacity that leads me to emphasize the importance of an approach which stresses the importance of the inductive approach: working with real sentences.

4.3 Integrating the Two Approaches:

This conclusion does not exclude a deductive approach however. The formal presentation of rules and generalizations can help a learner understand why a given sentence is expressed the way that it is and why each element is present. This kind of knowledge cannot be obtained directly from a native speaker of any language unless that person has been trained in linguistics. Such knowledge can be most easily obtained from the grammatical section of a language textbook which has been prepared by someone with formal linguistic training.

These rules are particularly useful in the beginning stages of language learning because they provide the learner with a set of statements with which to evaluate and interpret both incoming and outgoing sentences. However, when the learner becomes more competent in the language, to the point of actively producing and comprehending sentences in an ongoing conversation more or less spontaneously, the learner will no longer have need of these devices. That is, the kind of knowledge that they represent will have been converted into a more useable form.

5. Listening:

Much of traditional language teaching has placed great emphasis on production: the generation of sentences. This approach has implicitly assumed that if you can speak sentences, then you can also comprehend them. We are beginning to take note that these two skills (production and listening) are quite different activities and should be treated separately.

Earlier, we mentioned a problem of learning how to generate questions, but being unable to comprehend the answers. This is a typical problem of traditional approaches. At this time, language teachers are beginning to place more emphasis on being able to comprehend what is said during the earlier stages of language learning. This is not to say that no language production is emphasized, but rather that that comprehension should precede production at all times. This means that early emphasis is placed in understanding what is going on about you rather than being able to talk about it, and emphasis is placed on why a given sentence has the form that it does, rather than how to produce it.

After the learner has developed a listening fluency in certain areas, and knows what is being said and why, then is the time to encourage production of sentences for that topic.

6. Context

The process of communication involves two aspects; the message and the context in which the message is situated. A traffic light presents to us very little information (red, green and yellow) yet the context (a street intersection) permits us to provide a rich interpretation of the message: to stop, to go or to proceed with caution.

Learning a language can also be seen in this light, the message and the context. That is, in understanding a sentence, one can take advantage of the context in which the message is embedded for the interpretation of the communication as well as the message. The use of context is particularly useful for a beginning learner of a language, with only an incipient ability to interpret a message. For example, the context in which a greeting takes place is easily identifiable. The messages which can be asked are finite. The learner does not need to know the entire language, or even hear the entire sentence to know what is being said. A key word identified from a sentence may be sufficient for full comprehension of the message.

In teaching children to read, educators have found that context is very important. Beginning readers have a large amount of context (pictures) compared to the message (one sentence per page). When a child first approaches a new page, he/she will first examine the picture to delimit the range of possible messages that the sentence could represent. At one stage my son only used the first letter in each word, along with the context to construct the message. Not knowing how to recognize the words beyond the first letter, he would guess at its meaning, given the context, and pick a word that started with the same sound as the one he was reading and which made sense in the given context. Quite often he was correct and in so doing gradually built up his reading competence, but often he was not, though he might even complete a sentence having missed two or three words in the process. But the interesting thing was that if the sentence made sense given the context he would continue reading, while if it did not, he would rescan the sentence for a better reading.

The point here is not how to teach children to read, but the value of context in learning a language. This means that if you can control the context, you have a better chance of comprehending the messages.

6.1 Ways of Controlling Context

Of course, the classroom is an ideal way of controlling context. Here you can define the range of what is being expressed within very narrow limits and thereby optimize context. Some of these techniques are given as follows:

(a) Sen-sit Build Up:

In this drill, the learner is given a list of messages which will be presented to him/her, whether a list of nouns, commands, activities, numbers of anything. Ideally this list should be in the form of pictures, real objects or demonstrations. The important thing however, is that the learner knows the order of presentation.

The tutor then says the first message. (The learner should know in advance the meaning of what is being said.) If it is a command then the learner should carry it out. If it is a picture, the learner should point to the cell. If it is a thing, then the learner should point it out.

The learner should know at this point, that the tutor will either repeat the message or utter something new. If it is a new message, it has to be the second item. Once the second item has been introduced, the tutor then drills the learner on the first two messages.

At this point, the learner can expect one of two messages which are known, or if not that, a new message will be the third item on the list. When the third item is introduced, the tutor will drill the learner randomly on the first three items until the learner can identify them easily.

Then the fourth item is introduced and drilled in the same way until the list is complete.

Usually only seven items should be introduced in this way during one drill, and if more messages are to be introduced, then the messages should be divided into two drills.

(b) Practical Sentences:

This approach can also be used to drill practical sentences that the learner would like to use. Here the learner draws up a list of seven practical sentences that he/she would like to know and the tutor introduces them to the learner in the target language in that order.

(c) Comprehending a Text:

Dialog and monolog drills can be initially presented as totally unknown messages (no context). Learners then attempt to pick out what is already familiar to them from previous lessons or experience. This can profitably be repeated only two or three times.

Next the learner is allowed to look at the text to see how it is written, this helps the learner separate the flow of sounds into word sequences and will usually result in the identification of more words and more of the meaning of the sentence.

Next the learner is permitted to study the translation and go over the analysis of the text so that every aspect of the text is understood: the meaning of each word, and the reason for the presence of each element in the sentence. At this point, the learner should know what is going to be said, that is, the context has now been provided, but the usefulness of the text has not yet been exhausted.

The learner can listen to the text again, following along the written text, but this time he/she should be aware of what is being said and should know the meaning of each sentence. In order to do this, it may be necessary to hear the text several times, or to refer back to the analysis to be sure.

Finally, the learner can listen to the text without the use of written material, and should continue to do so until comprehension is 100%.

These texts should be returned periodically to be sure that comprehension is retained, and to reinforce the retention of this knowledge.

NOTE: To repeat a text verbatum is a virtual impossibility for most tutors, either due to bordom or to lack of experience in reading the language you are studying. For this reason it is preferable to record the text initially and rely on your recorder for repetitions rather than your tutor.

By the time the learner has gotten this far, he/she will know a lot of the language even though he/she still cannot produce it. Nevertheless, the production stage will be a lot easier because of this breakdown.

(d) Translation Drills:

One of the problems in production as well as recognition is figuring out or knowing how things would be said in a language. One method is trial and error, (learner says something and is, if lucky, corrected). An alternative to this is the translation drill. The learner either writes a composition in English for the learner to translate, or asks the learner to translate sentence by sentence. Here the learner knows what is going to be said and should have some idea of the words to be used and the kind of construction involved. Thus when the sentence appears, most of the context has already been provided.

Such drills should be taped, so that they can be reused.

(e) Known Event:

Here the learner asks the tutor to talk about a commonly shared event, such as going to the market, visiting a friend's house, or even a folktale told in English. Again the learner will have narrowed the range of contexts and should be able to interpret the message more richly than otherwise.

(f) Picture Drills:

Another way of controlling the context is to use a picture of some scene or activity that the learner is (1) interested in learning about or (2) has some familiarity with already. The learner then asks the tutor to talk about the picture or asks the tutor questions about the picture.

(g) Eavesdropping:

If you find yourself in a situation where the language is being spoken, e.g. a bar, in a taxi, or cookshop, listen to the language with the aim of trying to pick words you know and getting a general idea of what the conversation is about.

(h) Outside the classroom there are also techniques which can be used to narrow the context. One is to place one's self in a place where a known activity will take place. Greetings, marketing, bartering and so forth. When I was in Mexico City a few years ago, I had at my grasp very little Spanish, but I did know the seeming useless sentence "where is the post office?" Well, I found the post office, walked about a block away and asked my question. I knew what the answer had to be so I was able to figure out what the Spanish had to mean. Then I moved two blocks away and repeated the drill. Variations to this kind of exercise are limited only by lack of imagination.

We cannot underestimate the important role that memory has in language learning. We have already suggested that to have a minimum operating capacity a user must have a minimum of 1,000 to 2,000 concepts available for use both in recognition and production, as well as the understanding of how these words are organized into sentences (syntax).

In describing how to develop recognition skills, we suggested that the learner should spend considerable time listening in context: sentences should appear in a context in which their meaning would be clear, words should appear in the context of a sentence. This approach also suggests developing a familiarity with a fixed number of sentences.

Just think what this means: that while the specific goal of the exercise was the recognition of the given words, it is clear that in addition familiarity with these words has developed so that they might be recognized in other contexts. Furthermore, the specific sentences learned serve as the basis for recognizing a set of sister sentences in which only one word has been changed so that, even if the learner does not know the new word, the sentence may be understood due to context. Finally, the learner has learned to listen, a technique which will provide the primary source of new information about the language.

7. Learning Production

But production deserves its due. One cannot go around listening all the time, though I suspect one would be better off with an ability to comprehend what was going on about than with an ability to talk about it. Anyway, learning to produce sentences is also an important language ability.

To this end, particularily during the beginning we recommend that sentences as a whole be memorized. Now everyone claims that they have a weak memory and that memorizing scores of sentences is a real impossibility. Yet such is not the case, though one's language learning memory may not be operating at full capacity. That is, whether if is true or not, one should take the view that one's brain is like a muscle (an increasingly popular view) and that the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. In partial support of this view is a report by August Schliemann, the archaeologist who discovered Troy, who incidentally claimed that he had a weak memory. Source: Ilios by Henry Schliemann. 1880; London, John Murry).

First of all I took pains to learn to write legibly, and this I succeded in doing after twenty lessons from the famous caligraphist Magnée, of Brussels. Afterwards, in order to improve my position, I applied myself to the study of modern languages. My annual salary amounted only to 800 francs (£32), half of which I spent upon my studies; on the other half I lived---miserably enough, to be sure. My lodging, which cost 8 francs a month, was a wretched garret without a fire, where I shivered with cold in winter and was scorched with the heat in summer. My breakfast consisted of rye-meal porridge, and my dinner never cost more than twopence. But nothing spurs one on to study more than misery and the certain prospect of being able to release oneself from it by unremitting work. Besides, the desire of showing myself worthy of Minna created and developed in me a boundless courage. I applied myself with extraordinary diligence to the study of English. Necessity taught me a method which greatly facilitates the study of a language. This method consists in reading a great deal aloud, without making a translation, taking a lesson every day, constantly writing essays upon subjects of interest, correcting these under the supervision of a teacher, learning them by heart, and repeating in the next lesson what was corrected on the previous day. My memory was bad, since from my childhood it had not been exercised upon any object; but I made use of every moment, and even stole time for study. In order to acquire a good pronunciation quickly, I went twice every Sunday to the English church, and repeated to myself in a low voice every word of the clergyman's sermon. I never went on my errands, even in the rain, without having my book in my hand and learning something by heart; and I never waited at the post office without reading. By such methods I gradually strengthened my memory, and in three months' time found no difficulty in reciting from memory to my teacher, Mr. Taylor, in each day's lesson, word by word, twenty printed pages, after having read them over three times attentively. In this way I committed to memory the whole of Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield and Sir Walter Scott's Ivanhoe. From over-excitement I slept but little, and employed my sleepless hours at night in going over in my mind what I had read on the preceding evening. The memory being always much more concentrated at night than in the day-time, I found these repetitions at night of paramount use. Thus I succeeded in acquiring in half a year a thorough knowledge of the English language.

I then applied the same method to the study of French, the difficulties of which I overcame likewise in another six months. Of French authors, I learned by heart the whole of Fenelon's Adventures de Télémaque and Bernardin de Saint Pierre's Paul et Virginie. This unremitting study had in the course of a single year strengthened my memory to such a degree, that the study of Dutch, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese appeared very easy, and it did not take me more than six weeks to write and speak each of these languages fluently.

With the effect of the moist air of Holland, my complaint in the chest gradually disappeared during my first year's residence in Amsterdam, and it has never returned. But my passion for study caused me to neglect my mechanical occupation in the office of Mr. F. C. Quien, especially as I began to consider it beneath me. My principals would give me no promotion; they probably thought that a person who shows his incapacity for the business of a servant in an office proves thereby his unfitness for any higher duties. At last, however, through the intercession of my worthy friends, Louis Stoll of Mannheim and J. H. Ballauf of Bremen, I had on the 1st of March, 1844, the good fortune to obtain a situation as correspondent and bookkeeper in the office of Messrs. B. H. Schröder & Co. of Amsterdam, who engaged me at a salary of 1200 francs (£48); but when they saw my zeal, they added 800 francs a year more by way of encouragement. This generosity, for which I shall ever be grateful to them, was in fact the foundation of my prosperity; for, as I thought that I could make myself still more usefull by a knowledge of Russian, I set to work to learn that language also. But the only Russian books I could procure were an old grammar, a lexicon, and a bad translation of Les Adventures de Télémaque. In spite of all my enquiries, I could not find a teacher of Russian, since, with the exception of the Russian Vice-Consul, Mr. Tannenberg, who would not consent to give me lessons, there was not one in Amsterdam who understood a word of the language. So I betook myself to the study of it without a master, and, with the help of the grammar, I learned the Russian letters and their pronunciation in a few days. Then, following my old method, I began to write short stories of my own composition, and to learn them by heart. As I had no one to correct my work, it was, no doubt, extremely bad; but I tried at the same time to correct my mistakes by the practical exercise of learning the Russian Adventures de Télémaque by heart. It occurred to me that I should make more progress if I had some one to whom I could relate the adventures of Telemachus; so I hired a poor Jew for four francs a week, who had to come every evening for two hours to listen to my Russian recitations, of which he did not understand a syllable.

As the ceilings of the rooms of the common houses in Holland consist of single boards, people on the ground-floor can hear what is said in the third storey. My recitations therefore, delivered in a loud voice, annoyed the other tenants, who complained to the landlord, and twice while studying the Russian language I was forced to change my lodgings. But these inconveniences did not diminish my zeal, and in the course of six weeks I wrote my first Russian letter to Mr. Vasili Plotnikoff, the London agent for the great indigo dealers, Messrs. M.P.N. Malutin Brothers, at Moscow, and I found myself able to converse fluently with him and the Russian merchants Matweieff and Froloff, when they came to Amsterdam for the indigo auctions. After I had completed my study of the Russian language, I began to occupy myself seriously with the literatures of the languages I had learned.

8. F.S.I. Levels

There can be no doubt about it, Schliemann's system worked. Most people however would say, is this the most direct way to language mastery? Can't this approach be made more efficient? The answer is of course yes. And to explain this, we need to examine the system by which the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) determines the language competence of an individual.

The FSI examination is based on six levels ranging from S-0 (no competence) to S-5 (equivalent to that of a native speaker). The crucial level however is S-3 which is really the first stage at which the speaker has good control of the language and can continue developing language competence without special study. I call this level minimal language working capacity.

To attain an S-3 in a foreign lanuage is a real accomplishment and one which a learner who has attained this level can really feel proud of, though this should not by any means undervalue the attainment of the intermediate S-1 and S-2 levels. Furthermore, the development of these intermediate levels should be seen as targets in themselves and as steps along the way. These levels are summarized by the following self-test check list.

A CHECK LIST FOR SELF-APPRAISAL OF SPEAKING PROFICIENCY

(All answers must be YES to achieve at least the level of proficiency listed on the left, except for four items at the S-3 level.)

		YES	NO
S-0+	Can you use a minimum of thirty words in appropriate contexts? (i.e., not just count or recite the days of the week).	☐	☐
S-1	Can you tell someone how to get from here to the nearest hotel, restaurant, or post office?	☐	☐
	Can you ask and tell the time of day, day of the week, date?	☐	☐
	Can you order a simple meal?	☐	☐
	Can you negotiate for a hotel room or a taxi ride at a just price?	☐	☐
	Can you buy a needed item of clothing or a bus or train ticket?	☐	☐
	Can you understand and respond correctly to form questions about your nationality, marital status, occupation, date and place of birth, etc.?	☐	☐
	Can you make a social introduction and use appropriate leave-taking expressions?	☐	☐
	Can you use the language well enough to assist someone who does not know the language in coping with the situations or problems covered by the S-1 range?	☐	☐
S-1+	Can you meet all S-1 requirements and at least three of the S-2 requirements listed below?	☐	☐
S-2	Can you describe your present or most recent job or activity in some detail?	☐	☐
	Can you give detailed information about your family, your house, the weather today?	☐	☐
	Can you give or take simple messages over the telephone? (Forget the telephone, can you give or take simple messages?)	☐	☐

Can you hire an employee or arrange for special services, taking care of details such as salary, qualification, hours, special duties?(can you order a table from a carpenter?) ☐ ☐

Can you give a brief autobiography including a statement of your immediate plans and hopes? ☐ ☐

Can you describe the geography of the United States (or some other country) or familiar location? ☐ ☐

Can you describe the basic structure of the United States government? ☐ ☐

Can you describe the function and purpose of the organization you represent? ☐ ☐

Do you feel confident that you understand what native speakers want to tell you about the above topics at least 80% of the time? ☐ ☐

S-3 Are you afraid that you will misunderstand information given to you over the telephone? ☐ ☐

(Answers should be YES)
Can you speak to a group of educated native speakers on a professional subject and be sure you are communicating what you want to, without obviously amusing or irritating them linguistically? ☐ ☐

Can you listen, take notes, and summarize accurately a speech or an informal discussion on your area of special interests, heard on the radio or over a public address system? ☐ ☐

Can you (on a social occasion) defend U.S. attitudes toward culture, race relations, or foreign aid from attack by an anti-American student or politician? ☐ ☐

Can you cope with such trying linguistic situations as broken-down plumbing, an undeserved traffic ticket, a serious social or diplomatic blunder made by you or a colleague? ☐ ☐

Can you follow connected discourse on a non-technical subject, e.g., a panel discussion on the status of women? ☐ ☐

Can you serve as an informal interpreter on subjects in the S-3 range? ☐ ☐

Do you feel that you have a professional command (rather than just a practical one) of the language? ☐ ☐

S-3+	Can you meet all S-3 requirements and at least three of these S-4 requirements?	☐	☐
S-4	In professional discussions, is your vocabulary always extensive and precise enough to enable you to convey your exact meaning?	☐	☐
	Are you able to alter your speech deliberately, depending upon whether you are talking to university professors, close friends, employees, etc.?	☐	☐
	Can you serve as an informal interpreter for a U.S. senator or cabinet official on all diplomatic and social functions?	☐	☐
	Do you practically never make a grammatical mistake?	☐	☐
	Do you think you can carry out any job assignment as effectively in the language as in English?	☐	☐
S-4+	In discussions on all subjects, is your vocabulary always extensive and precise enough to enable you to convey your exact meaning?	☐	☐
S-5	Do native speakers react to you as they do to each other?	☐	☐
	Do you sometimes feel more at home in the language than in English?	☐	☐
	Can you do mental arithmetic in the language without slowing down?	☐	☐
	Is your vocabulary at least as extensive and precise as in English?	☐	☐
	Do you consider yourself a native speaker of the language?	☐	☐

The difference between S-2 and S-3 is really that between knowing a language so that you can use it in any context, and knowing enough of the language so that you can use it in a fixed context. This means that the skills listed under S-1 and S-2 can be specifically targeted for. That is, it is possible to define a specific set of contexts: biography, greetings, simple messages, etc. in which it is possible to build a working language competence. This can be accomplished by developing a listening ability for the range number of sentences which are likely to appear in that context and a speaking capacity for the specific skills.

By specifically targeting for these goals, it should be possible to achieve an S-1 after 50-60 hours of study (assuming that this time if being used effectively) and it should also be possible to achieve an S-2 after another 100 hours. One of the important things to remember about this phase of language study is that performance rather than competence is being measured, thus it is not how much you know, but how well you use it that counts. This is why context is so very important, for comprehension is as much anticipating what is to be said (context) as it is understanding the content of what is being said. Thus, "hanging in there" and making the effort to communicate (even if by gesture) is at least half the battle.

But while these targets are goals in themselves which the learner can aim for and accomplish, they can also be seen as steps on the way toward real language competence (S-3). The internalizing of a few hundred sentences can serve as the basic corpus of messages which can be expanded and applied to other situations.

In the communications handbook that accompanies this text, this has been the design: the first lessons are aimed at S-1 skills, while the later lessons aim at S-2 skills, so that by the time the book is completed, the learner should achieve an S-2 level and be well on the way to achieving an S-3 ability. Though in all honesty that level will require continued study.

Earlier we suggested ways of developing listening comprehension, what follows is a way of completing the use of the text, the learning of how to produce it.

9. Memorizing a Text (Layering)

Memorization of a text can be viewed as a sequential process beginning with the first word and going on to the next and so forth. Yet there is another way to view the process, and that is to see the text as a series of layers. For example, in learning to comprehend a text (discussed earlier) several steps were outlined, each one gleaning more information from the text, building up in the learner's mind layer upon layer of information about the text. When a learner has learned to comprehend a text, the job of memorizing the text is already half completed. The following steps are listed below:

A. Go over the text sentence by sentence (phrase by phrase and even word by word if necessary) with your tutor to develop as accurate a pronunciation as possible.

One procedure for doing this is for the learner to attempt to say the sentence. If the sentence is correct the tutor will say that it is correct (or signal so by not saying anything); if the sentence is incorrect, the tutor will repeat the sentence. This should continue until the learner at that point has done his/her best.

The major problem at this stage is the generosity of the tutor. The tutor really has to be encouraged to be critical. Thus the learner must repeatedly ask the tutor if that is the real way it is said, or whether it can be said better and should show enthusiasm in the tutor's pointing out these fine points. Otherwise the tutor will be inclined to let pronunciation slide.

B. Once the text has been gone over carefully, the text should be repeated sentence by sentence until a normal rate of speed is achieved. This can be practiced using a variety of techniques. Repeating the sentences after the tutor (or a tape recorder), along with the tutor or by tracking.

Tracking is a technique of repeating a sentence after about a second's delay. This has the effect of separating the listening part of the task from the production part of the task.

C. To be sure you are aware of all the distinctions, the learner should practice writing the sentence down after hearing it. This dictation drill should be done sentence by sentence, and in beginning stages, the sentence should be repeated as many as three times.

D. Writing down the text from memory is also a good exercise. This is a form of self-test which will give the learner a good idea of what is known and what isn't.

E. This stage should be followed by the learner attempting to say the text from memory with the tutor prompting at first.

F. The task is complete when the learner can rattle off the entire text at a normal rate of speed.

G. This exercise can be followed up by a question-answer drill in which the tutor asks questions in such a way that the memorized sentences will be the answers to the questions.

NOTE: Initial texts do not have to be long, as few as five sentences. But the learner should try to increase the length of these texts as soon as possible.

10. Self-Instructed and Learner-Centered Approaches

There are a number of reasons for emphasizing this kind of approach to language acquisition.

1. African languages are usually under such low demand for foreign language instruction that, teachers are unavailable, untrained or at best minimally trained. This means that when a tutor is hired, that person will never make the teaching of the targeted language his profession (unlike French, Chinese or Russian) and will probably be given a crash course in how to teach the language. Inevitably, this person will feel awkward because of the expectations

placed on him/her and the inadequate training given. This situation will create an avoidable tension in the classroom.

2. It is the learner who is the person who will either profit or suffer from the experience. It is the learner who has the most at stake. A successful language learning program will lead to a deeper and a more effective experience for the volunteer or other language learner. This being the case, it would be better to concentrate efforts on helping the learner to learn rather than on helping the teacher to teach.

3. Many language training programs allow insufficient time, regardless of how that time is used to allow for the achievement of a minimal speaking competence. This means that serious learners will have to continue their learning outside the classroom anyway.

4. Learners trained in a teacher-centered program in which they have little control in how the class will be run, are ill equipt to make the transition to learning on their own.

For these reasons, many educators are moving to learner-centered approaches. These approaches place more attention on the learner, giving the learner the sophistication in the types of learning techniques that are available, the ways drills should be run and so forth. While these approaches have their own drawbacks and may be slower during the initial stages, they do have a number of advantages.

1. Tutors are released from their anxiety. Their responsibilities are consonant with their training and experience. They are responsible for (1) providing a model of the target language (2) correcting learner responses and (3) running drills which the learner will help to establish. The tutor is not responsible for preparing lessons, for the success of the student, or for grading the student's progress. Thus the tutor is only responsible for what any native speaker of a language is capable of doing. This situation eliminates the tension of the classroom that arises when these responsibilities are placed on the tutor. As a result the relationship between tutor and learner is more of cooperation rather than apprehension.

2. The learner being placed fully in charge of learning no longer must bear the burden of suffering under a tutor whose methods the learner objects to. If the methods being used are unsuitable, they can be changed.

3. Given insufficient time in a training program, learners will be forced to switch to a learner-centered program anyway if they are going to continue their language learning, so why not begin a learner-centered emphasis from the start?

4. A learner who has experienced learner-center training from the start, will be well prepared to make the transition program to learning on their own.

However, learner-centered language training requires a considerable amount of training of the learner in the techniques and approaches of language learning. This cannot only be done in the abstract, but requires supervision by an experienced language teacher and ideally a textbook which is oriented toward this approach to language learning such as the following textbook. In the communications handbook accompanying this volume, each lesson is both aimed at the learner (though it can be used by a classroom teacher or a partially trained tutor) and contains detailed instructions as to how drills should be run and dialogs used. It presents the grammatical notes in terms which an untrained learner can understand and contrasts the target language with English so that the learner can see exactly where the major points of contrasts. Finally the handbook contains a set of suggestions for self-study, procedures which the learner can carry out on his/her own to continue language study.

11.1 Tutor Selection

When making the transition from a formal language training program to a totally learner-centered program, the first major task will be to locate a tutor who will be willing to help you.

In this regard, it is important for the learner to remember that a number of factors are involved in the tutor learner relationship. Some of these are listed as follows:

1. Personality. There is always the possibility of a personality clash. That for some reason the tutor and the learner do not hit it off, or for that matter they may. Factors here may be age, sex, education and cultural background as well as pure personality differences.

2. Relationship. In most cases, a learner-tutor arrangement will necessarily develop into a deeper relationship involving mutual reciprocations based on available resources. The learner will be given things, have things done for him/her as well as being informed about the workings of the community. In return, the learner can be expected to return the favor in terms of textbooks or school fees if the tutor is a student, money or other gifts. This relationship can be controlled by both parties, and it is in general sound advice to deepen the relationship slowly.

3. Knowledge of language. It is commonly accepted that the real language is known by old people, and not by young schoolboys and girls, therefore, it is often said that if you want to learn the real language it is best to contact the old people. This approach too, has its problems, however, for it may well be that old people do not know English or any other medium of common communication, therefore the learner may actually at first engage a tutor who knows English.

4. Knowledge of how to write the language. For most Liberian languages, a writing system has been established, and which is in use by at least some members of the community. If this is so, it is preferable to find a tutor who can read and write in the target language, for it will help you in recording texts and writing down sentences. You can even ask your tutor to prepare texts, dialogs and sentences for you to study.

5. Reputation of the tutor. Not everyone in the town has the same esteem in the eyes of the community. To some extent the esteem of the tutor will rub off on the learner and vise versa.

These points suggest that in engaging a tutor that one should proceed cautiously. The learner should wait until he/she is established in town or until sufficient contacts are made before showing interest in a tutor. Then one should ask respected members of the community who might be recommended. (Hiring someone without a recommendation is a real gamble.) One might ask other volunteers, teachers, your landlord, village head, pastor or other such persons.

It is always good to not commit one's self too soon. That is by saying that the period is temporary, for a few weeks only or that one wants to try a number of people, one can avoid the problem of being stuck with someone who isn't working or of the embarrassment of having to fire someone.

Finally, when the learner has found a tutor with whom he/she feels confident, the arrangement can be made more permanant. It is only at this time that the learner should gradually allow the relationship to deepen.

11.2 Organizing a Learning Schedule

The most important point to be made here is consistancy. That is whatever program the learner decided to set up, it should be followed religiously. It is far better to maintain a modest commitment of only a few hours or even less than to set a schedule of learning that is too ambitious to keep. The learner should endeavor to establish learning times that are unlikely to be disturbed by special events, and in the event that they are, the language session should be rescheduled.

The second most important thing is to structure the sessions so that the learner and the tutor are aware of what is supposed to take place during the session and what is supposed to be done by the learner as preparation or follow-up. The following schedule is designed for a learning session involving three contact periods per week. This structure is probably too ambitious for the learner who is also holding down an 8 hour job, but if followed will allow the learner to progress rapidly. In the event that the learner has less time to commit to the learning of the language, the schedule can be pared down.

A well-written language textbook ought to have a large number of drills that can be used in the self-instructional mode. Most such textbooks are organized so that a chapter be completed each week by a class meeting five hours per week. The following outline suggests one way in which a textbook chapter can be organized into a weekly lesson plan.

11.3 Use of a Spoken Dialog

Class Period #1

(1) Listen to the dialog with book closed, for comprehension. Record the dialog with a cassette tape recorder for later use.

(2) Listen to the dialog, this time following the book (listening for word-divisions and other phonological cues).

(3) Analyze the dialog for content. Work with your tutor if necessary so that you understand the full meaning and structure of each sentence.

Homework #1

(1) Listen to the dialog on the cassette recorder for comprehension so that each sentence is correctly identified and each word is heard as a separate entity.

(2) Repeat the above as often as is necessary. If the structure of the dialog is unclear, return to the written text, following the spoken dialog word by word until it becomes clear.

(3) Write the dialog several times, copying directly from the text (not from memory).

(4) Enter new vocabulary items into your notebook.

Class Period #2

(1) Listen again to the dialog spoken by the tutor.

(2) Practice saying each sentence with the tutor (using a backward buildup if necessary) until each sentence of the dialog is said flawlessly at a normal rate.

(3) Practice dialog with tutor or with other learners in the class.

Homework #2	(1)	Memorize dialog for following class. For beginners this dialog will be quite short (3-4 lines) but by the end of the first year, these dialogs will enlarge to about 20 lines per week.
Class Period #3	(1)	Use the dialog in class. Remember to simulate the context of the dialog completely; stand, sit, look the other person in the eye at the appropriate times, use props.
	(2)	Develop variations on the dialog using word substitution or sentence "transformation" as appropriate to your level of knowledge.

11.4 Use of Written Texts

Written texts should consist of short (ten-sentence) descriptions, stories relevant to a specific context. As the course progresses, the texts will become longer.

Class Period #1	(1)	Presentation, recording and analysis of the text.
Homework #1	(1)	Listening comprehension of the text (sentences as units, words as discrete entities) and the writing out of the text (not from memory).
Class Period #2	(1)	Practice in hearing the text with phonemic accuracy, practice in saying the text at normal speed with phonemic accuracy.
Homework #2	(1)	Memorization of the text (now that it is understood both syntactically and phonetically). This will involve writing it out, saying it orally, and tracking the taped version to achieve normal speed and timing.
Class Period #3	(1)	Recitation of text orally and/or writing it down from memory.
Homework #3	(1)	Correction of noted errors.

11.5 Use of structural drills

All drills should be taped for home listening and practice.

1) Phonological drills:
Basic phonological transcription can be learned through dictation exercises. Errors in these dictation exercises will reveal problem areas in phonemic discrimination.

In consultation with the language coordinator and the textbook, discrimination drills, including minimal pair exercises can be prescribed, recorded and used, both in class and at home.

It is important to remember that learners must be able to hear phonemic differences before they can be expected to articulate them.

Once phonemic differences are mastered, accuracy can be further improved through transcription exercises. Articulation can be further improved through dialog and text repetition, tracing and memorization.

2) Syntactic Drills:
Each drill begins with listening comprehension. It is important that learners comprehend what is going on: the purpose of the drill, the meaning of the words and constructions involved, and what they are supposed to do with it.

Once the drill is understood, learners should go through the drill, repeating each sentence after the tutor if necessary until normal speed and accurate pronunciations are achieved.

The drill is run according to the specifications given in the textbook. Answers and responses must be given at normal speed. If that is impossible, either go back to the preceeding step or abandon the drill and consult with the language coordinator. The drill should be practiced until it is carried out perfectly, though this mastery need not be achieved during the first running of the drill in class.

3) Vocabulary:

A minimum of 40 lexical concepts should be acquired each week. These may come from the text or from the genralized vocabulary lists.

Several types of drills have been developed for the learning of vocabulary in the Communications Handbook companion volume. Space does not permit a detailed statement of these drills, but the following list is indicative of the types involved.

(a) vocabulary
(b) flash cards with pictures on one side
(c) related vocabulary lists
(d) the sens-it-cell

12. Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the thinking, strategy and methodology involved in the study of a foreign language and has gone into the planning and construction of these learning materials. It is presented here for the express purpose of providing the learner with a general understanding of the task and the way to proceed.

CHAPTER III

INSTRUCTIONS TO TUTORS

1. General Remarks

The chances are that if you have been asked to tutor someone in a Liberian language, you probably have never taught your language to a foreigner before. If this is the case, you may be very worried because you are not sure about what to do. If you are worried, continue to read this chapter, for it contains a set of suggestions about what is important in a language learning situation.

2. Preliminary Considerations

Even before you get started, there are some important considerations, the first is the organization of the learning situation. The learning sessions have to be considered important by both the tutor and the learner. To emphasize the importance of these sessions, it is important to "mark" these learning sessions as follows.

A. Time:

The sessions should have a specific beginning time and a closing time. These times should be kept the same from week to week. There should also be a penalty for lateness and no matter what the reason, missed sessions should be made up.

B. Place:

The sessions should be held in a specified place which is considered good for learning. Tables and straight chairs are considered better than sofas and beds. Classrooms are better than homes, but homes are better for most people than bars.

C. Agenda:

There should be an agenda or class plan of what is to be done during each period. This can be prepared either by the learner or by the tutor, depending on what has been arranged. An agenda should contain a list of topics to be covered, including: (1) pages in the textbook, (2) correction of homework, (3) practice of dialog, (4) taping of dialogs, (5) vocabulary study, (6) free conversation and so forth. These agendas (technically called "lesson plans") should be stored somewhere (a file, notebook, etc.) as a record of accomplishment during the course of study.

D. Preparation/Followup

A learner should expect to do out-of-class preparation and followup for each session. This may involve studying the dialog, grammar, cultural notes, taped aspects of the class session, vocabulary work, preparation for class discussions or taking excursions into the language community to practice what has been learned. Whatever the event, the tutor and learner should agree to the preparation and followup activities, preferably in writing (see agenda) before the end of the preceding class.

3. The Role of the Tutor

In most cases, the tutor is not required to be an experienced language teacher or someone who knows a great deal about the grammar of the language being studied. Rather, what is expected of the tutor is simply what follows:

A. An ability to speak your language clearly

B. An ability to be patient

C. An ability to point out and correct mistakes.

4. Classroom Rules of Order

There are a number of rules of running a class, which if followed will help to make the class situation useful and productive.

A. Always have a session agenda and stick to the topic. (see 2C above)

B. Always begin on time and stay within agreed upon time blocks.

C. Emphasize the use of the target language. The tutor should try at first to explain things, directions, concepts and so forth in the target language using English only if absolutely necessary (the use of English is usually a hinderance rather than an aid to learning another language).

D. Drills should be run smoothly with no delays or interruptions. If the learners are taking too long to respond, it will be necessary to simplify or change the drill. The instructions for running each drill are given along with each drill in the communications handbook. A drill can be simplified either by skipping the drill altogether or by eliminating some of its complexity. One way to do this is to treat the drill like a dialog to be learned (see instructions for learning dialogs in the communications handbook). Once familiar with the content of the drill, it can then be reintroduced as a drill; this time with better results.

   Another way is to have the students read the drill from the textbook, though the normal way to run a drill is without student use of textbooks. These drills should also be recorded onto tape so that they can be replayed as one of the homework activities.

   If you and the class are still having trouble with a drill, ask the lanugage supervisor or whoever is in charge of the program to help you.

While many tutors think that they have to provide more than this, this is all that is truely necessary. But, at the same time, the ability to do these things is very important. Because of this, the above points are discussed in more detail below.

A. Speaking Clearly

When you speak your language to your students, you should try to speak at a normal rate of speed. This means that you should not speak too rapidly as if you were in a hurry, or too slowly, as if you were talking to a small child.

B. Being Patient

It is important to remember that learning a language is a slow process because it requires a lot of learning: not only new words, but new ways of saying things which are very different from the way that the learner is used to saying things. You will find that a learner will forget much of what you tell him and that is why you must repeat things frequently: dialogs, storys, drills and so forth. From the viewpoint of the tutor, it appears as though the learners are not very smart. This is why it is so necessary for the tutor to be very patient with the learner.

C. Correcting Responses

While it is important to be patient, it is also necessary to correct errors in the responses that learners give. If they say something incorrectly, they should be told that it is incorrect and be asked to say it again correctly. One way to do this is to simply repeat the response correctly following an incorrect response. The learner hearing this will then correct his response following the model of the tutor. If it is a matter of pronunciation, and the student is unable to pronounce it correctly after two or three tries, then the tutor should tell the learner that the pronunciation is still incorrect, but that it will be possible for him/her to correct it later on. Remember, if the student is shown that his pronunciation of certain sounds is incorrect, the chances are that the student will learn to pronounce the sounds correctly in time.

CHAPTER IV

REFERENCE GRAMMAR OF MÃNIYAKÃ

A. THE SOUND SYSTEM OF MÃNIKAYÃ

The Contrastive Sounds of Mãniyakã

Every language has a finite set of discrete, contrastive sounds called phonemes. Combinations or strings of these phonemes serve to represent the various words of the language which can themselves be strung together to make sentences.

Mãniyakã phonemes are of two major types: segmental and suprasegmental. Segmental phonemes are divided into two major classes, consonants and vowels.

1. Consonants

1.1 The chart on the following page lists the consonant sounds of Mãniyakã and, when appropriate, their English approximates.

THE LIBERIAN MANDINGO/MÃNIYAKÃ ALPHABET:

THE CONSONANTS

Letter	English approximate	Mandingo example	Translation of example
b	beat	buku	'book'
c	chime	cama	'between'
d	dig	dunu	'rooster'
f	fish	fa	'father'
gb	-----	gbãgbã	'dust'
*h	hope	hakili	'knowledge'
j	judge	jɔɔna	'early'
k	kite	kami	'guinea fowl'
l	light	lulu	'star'
m	meet	malo	'rice'
n	near	nɛnɛ	'cold'
ny	onion	nyi	'good'
*ŋ	sing	ŋalã	'mat'
*p	pop	pitiki	'shop'
*r	-----	rumu	'room'
s	see	sɛnɛ	'farm'
t	taunt	tã	'ten'
w	win	wuse	'potato'
y	yearn	yano	'here'
*z	zip	zipu	'shirt'

*The 5 starred consonants appear rarely and most often are in borrowed words.

The Liberian Mandingo/Mãniyakã /r/ is not directly equivalent to the English /r/. The English /r/ is generally described as a liquid sound. The Mandingo /r/ is more similar to that used in Spanish, and may sometimes sound like a /d/. The sound is made by tapping the tip of the tongue against the area directly behind the front teeth.

1.2 Most Mãniyakã consonants are pronounced essentially the same as the one's they correspond to in English. Below are some examples using these sounds in Mãniyakã words.

b. ba...mother
balokɛya...talking place
biwɔɔlɔ...sixty

c. cama...between
coya...ugly
cɔmɔnu...old man

d. dagbolo...lip
duuma...on the ground
duniya...world

f. fa...father
fasola...vein
fila...two

g. Gola...Gola
Grebo...Grebo

gb. gbe...open area
gbã...okra
gbi...owl

h. hakili...intelligence
hɛrɛ...peace
halijɛni...heaven

j. jawa...onion
jo...god
ji...water

k. kala...pencil
kesu...box
kini...rice

l. lafẽ...bed
lasili...bunch
lu...yard

m. mina...deer
mĩfẽ...drink
mulu...knife

n. nõ...dirty
nũ...nose
nɛɛ...iron

ny. nyama...in front of
nyaye...to understand
nyi...good

ŋ. ŋalã...mat
ŋalã...street urchin

p. pipo...prayer gown, male
põdi...nail (for building)
pese...to weigh

r. re...hook (for fishing)
rumu...room

s. sa...snake
sɛnɛ...to plant
sisi...smoke

t. taa...to go
timi...to cross
tu...forest

w. wɔsũ...a type of tree
wula...afternoon
wuli...to boil

y. yeno...there
yano...here
ye...with

z. zanu...rabbit
Zorzorwu...Zorzor

1.21 With one exception, Mãniyakã has no contrastive r, that is, l and r are not distinguished from one another. Therefore, it is common to hear a word pronounced using either an l or an r, and for there to be no difference in meaning for the two pronunciations.

The Mãniyakã consonant, gb, is not found in English and may cause difficulty for a speaker of English.

Some of the sounds in Mãniyakã have English equivalents but have different distributional restrictions in Mãniyakã. For this reason, they also may cause difficulty to the speaker of English. These sounds are ny and ŋ.

1.22 gb is an implosive "b" and is easily confused with a plain b. To pronounce an implosive consonant requires that the air be drawn into the mouth rather than pushed out as for most consonants. gb is formed by preparing to say g and then closing the lips at the same time as saying b. The learner can develop an ability to discriminate between gb and b by using the following table as a drill. See section K.33 of Lesson 1 for additional examples.

ba	goat	gba	kitchen
bã	finish	gbã	okra
bi	today	gbi	owl
basi	medicine	gbasi	hit
bɛlɛ	small amount	gbɛlɛ	different

1.23 ny is the sound in the English words onion and canyon. Unlike its English counterpart, the Mãniyakã sound ny may occur at the beginning of a word. It is sometimes confused with n.

nyi	good	ni	when
nya	eye	na	to come
nyɛnɛ	urine	nɛnɛ	cold
nyo	corn	no	to stop

1.24 ŋ is the ng sound in the English word singing and coming. The Mãniyakã sound ŋ, unlike the English one, may occur at the beginning of a word. It seems to have limited usage in Mãniyakã.

ŋalã	mat
ŋalã	street urchin

1.25 The Mãniyakã sounds h, p, and z, appears rarely in the language. The words they are found in are generally borrowed words, that is, words taken from a different language. Mãniyakã contains words from many different languages. Words related to items introduced to Africa by Western cultures often are called by a word which sounds similar to an English or French counterpart. Words related to Islamic religion are borrowed from Arabic. Words that refer to other ethnic groups or items originally from these groups in Liberia are generally borrowed from one of the indigenous Liberian languages.

2. Vowels

While Mãniyakã vowels are similar to those used in English, they are not identical. For more details consult Chapter VI which is entitled Learning the Sound System of Mande Languages. The Mãniyakã vowels are i, e, ɛ, a, u, o, and ɔ.

i.	jii	to go down	a.	saa	sheep	ɔ.	mɔɔ	person
	bilini	pigeon		fala	to tear		kɔlɔ	old
	kini	cooked rice		jawa	onion		bɔɔ	dish
e.	se	to be able	u.	duu	ground			
	gbe	field		kunu	yesterday			
	nee	tongue		mulu	knife			
ɛ.	fɛ	calabash	o.	dolo	beer			
	bɛlɛ	small amount		boo	feces			
	sɛnɛ	farm		bolo	hand			

3. Supasegmental Features

Tone, long vowels, nasalized vowels.

3.1 Tone

Mãniyakã is a tone language which means that two words can be distinguished from one another according to the pitch of the voice. There are a large number of words in Mãniyakã that have identical consonants and vowels but they constitute a minimal pair with respect to the tones that each has.

Mãniyakã has two tones which are referred to as HIGH and LOW. Low tones are represented throughout the book as a line drawn under the appropriate vowel. High toned vowels are left unmarked.

dunu	load	du̲nu	rooster
gbãgbã	dust	gbã̲gbã	bracelet
sẽ	leg	sẽ̲	bridge
so	horse	so̲	town
wula	afternoon	wu̲la	forest

As it can be difficult to distinguish the tone of a word used in isolation, after learning a new word, it is best to hear the word in a sentence.

3.2 Long Vowels

Mãniyakã has both long and short vowels. A long vowel is indicated by a doubling of the vowel letter, e.g., i̲ vs. i̲i̲. Long vowels, as the term implies, have a longer duration than short vowels. Long vowels may be nasalized.

ii.	jii	to descend	uu.	duu	ground
	di̲ini	small		tu̲u	muscle
	kũtii	leader		lu̲ulu	five
ee.	ne̲e	tongue	oo.	sõõ	price
	keeya	sickle		boo	feces
	seelã	needle		doobõ	barr
ɛɛ.	nɛɛ	metal	ɔɔ.	bɔ̲ɔ	swamp
	jɛ̲ɛ	fish		lɔ̲ɔfɛ	market
	tɛɛ	cut		nyɔ̃ɔ̃	together
aa.	saa	sheep			
	baabaa	termite			
	na̲ani	four			

3.3 Nasalized Vowels

All Maniyaka vowels may occur in a nasalized form. These vowels are written as ĩ, ẽ, ɛ̃, ã, ũ, õ, and ɔ̃.

ĩ.	bĩ	fall	ã.	dã	comb (one's hair)
	fĩ	dark		sã	to buy
	ĩ	yes		tã	ten
ẽ.	dẽ	to hang up	ũ.	tũ	set (a bone)
	fẽ	thing		sũ	tree
	sẽ	bridge		kũ	head
ɛ̃	dɛ̃	child	o.	bõ	house
	mɛ̃	hear		nõ	dirty
	bɛ̃	good		sõ	thief
ɔ̃	bɔ̃	spill			
	sɔ̃	liver			
	tɔ̃	grasshopper			

3.31 A Note On Timing

Mãniyakã is a syllable-timed tongue. This means that every syllable has the same duration as every other one (long vowels are considered to be two syllables.) In English this is not the case because English is a stress-timed language. This means that not all syllables have the same duration. Rather, English attempts to establish equal intervals between major stresses in the sentence. In the following sentences, the words went and store receive the major sentence stress.

The reader will note when saying the following sentences that it is necessary to speed up in the longer sentences to maintain the equal timing between stresses.

He went to the store.
He went to the new store.
He went quickly to the new store.
He went quickly to the new super store.
He went quicly to the big new super store.

Plural Formation - Culture Note

To form the plural in Mandingo, attach the suffix -lu to the end of a noun or noun phrase (more on the noun phrase later). The suffix is used only if there are three or more. The suffix has a low tone. The suffix is combined with alienable nouns in the following manner:

kala	"pencil"	kalalu	"pencils"
buku	"book"	bukulu	"books"

Inalienable nouns do not always use the plural suffix -lu. It is used when referring to two or more of the same body part on a single individual. For example:

n bolokɔni	"my finger"	n bolokɔnilu	"my fingers"
i sẽ	"your leg"	i sẽnu	"your legs"

The plural suffix -lu is not used with inalienable nouns if a single body part and two or more individuals are referred to. This usage differs from its English equivalent. The assumption is that each person has only one. For example:

n kã	"my throat"	mɔ kã	"our throats"
a nyaloya	"his face"	ai nyaloya	"their faces"

Notice that -lu is pronounced (and written here) as -nu if the noun ends with a nasal vowel. For example:

kolã	'light'	kolãnu	'lights'
sẽ	'leg'	sẽnu	'legs'

Placement of Numbers within the Noun Phrase

a. The number immediately follows the noun in the following examples:

dɔ̱ɔmuso fila	"two younger sisters"
wulini tã	"ten dogs"

Note that when a number is present, the plural suffix -lu is not used.

b. In more complex noun phrases, such as "four cups of rice", the number appears at the end of the phrase. For example:

tia lasili fila	"two piles of peanuts"
fɔlɔtɔlɔ bɔlɔ wɔ̱ɔlɔ	"six bags of peppers"

Numbers

In the Mandingo counting system, to form the numbers 30, 40, 50,...90, the prefix bi- is added to the numbers 3, 4, 5,...9; that is, bisawa, binaani, biluulu,...nikɔnɔ. (See the vocabulary list at the beginning of this lesson for the complete list.) The number, 20, is translated as the word, mũã, not as "bifila".

Number as Head Noun

Numbers can appear as the subject of a sentence in Mãniyakã as they do in English.

Fɛ tã ye duuma.	Ten calabashes are on the ground.
Tã ye duuma.	Ten are on the ground. or There are ten on the ground.

Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers in Mandingo are formed by adding the suffix -na to the cardinal form of a number. For example:

fila	"two"	tã	"ten"
filana	"second"	tãna	"tenth"

The only exception to the above is the word "first". In Mandingo jɔɔna means "first", NOT kɛlɛ̃na. The word for "last" is labã.

Time Expressions

To express the English concepts of "in the (time of day)", one must use a postpositional phrase as the following examples demonstrate.

sɔɔmãda_la	in the morning
su_lɔ	in the evening
wula_la	in the afternoon

ka na nɛ X_la lɛ ni

The phrase ka na nɛ X_la lɛ ni, may be translated into English as "to come (time expression) ago". X represents a time expression like 'ten months' or 'five days'. When used in a sentence, the verb requires the suffix -ni, this is the same suffix that was described in the Grammar and Culture Notes of lessons 4 and 8.

N nani yano a kalo na̲ani_la lɛ ni.	I came here four months ago.
A̲i nani tɛ Labiya a sã kɛ̲lɛ̃_na lɛ ni.	They didn't come to Liberia a year ago.

The negative is formed by placing the negative auxiliary tɛ after the verb, nani.

Notice that:

1. if there is a locative phrase (naming 'where' the person came to) that the phrase immediately follows the verb
2. there the pronoun a immediately preceeds the time expression.

Days of the Week

The word lõ, 'day', is used when forming the days of the week in Mandingo. The word for 'Saturday', does not require the use of lõ.

jumasilõ	Sunday
tɛnɛlõ	Monday
talalõ	Tuesday
alabalõ	Wednesday
alamisalõ	Thursday
jumalõ	Friday
sibili	Saturday

Adjectives

Formation

Adjectives in Mandingo follow the noun and require the suffix -ni. For example:

Ji sumayani.	The water is cold.
Mãgolo diyani.	The mango is good/pleasing/sweet.

The negative of the above sentences is formed by using the auxiliary tɛ. The auxiliary appears after the adjective. For example:

Nyo diyani.	The corn is sweet.
Nyo diyani tɛ.	The corn is not sweet.

An exception to the above is the adjective nyi "good". It uses the auxiliary ka in the positive sense; the auxiliary appears between the noun and nyi. In the negative the auxiliary ma is used; it also appears between the noun and nyi. For example:

Mãtilie ka nyi.	The lemon is good.
Mãtilie ma nyi.	The lemon is not good.

Past Tense

Adjectives form the past tense by using the auxiliary tɛɛ in the positive sense and the auxiliary titɛ in the negative sense. These auxiliaries appear after the adjective. For example:

Ka̱fe gbani.	The coffee is hot.
Ka̱fe gbani tɛɛ.	The coffee was hot.
Ka̱fe gbani tɛ.	The coffee isn't hot.
Ka̱fe gbani titɛ.	The coffee wasn't hot.

Modifiers

The adverbs bale and kubɛ̃ "very" and kuyu "too" may be used to modify adjectives. In a sentence they appear after any auxiliary. For example:

Na̱ komuni kuyu.	The sauce is too hot.
Na̱ komuni tɛɛ bale.	The sauce was very hot.
Na̱ komuni tɛ kubɛ̃.	The sauce isn't very hot.

jã, jãya

The adjective jã/jãya is used to mean both "tall" and "far". The meaning is distinguished by the structure of the sentence. For example:

A_ma jãyani.	It is far. (Lit., To-it-is far.)
A_ma jãyani tɛ.	It is not far. (Lit., To-it-is far-not)

versus

A jãyani.	She is tall.
A jãyani tɛ.	He is not tall.

ba

Ba may be translated as 'many, lots of'. It functions as an adjective and follows the noun it modifies.

Dɛ̃ ba ye Fanta bolo.	Fanta has lots of children.

In some instances, it may be translated as 'very'; for example:

A sãye ba lɛ ni.	She is very old.

Placement of o

O, 'that' appears in front of the noun it modifies, e.g.,

N nato o waati.	I will come at that time.

This differs from the normal placement of adjectives, which is after the noun it modifies.

X we Yla

When giving instructions in Maniyaka, it is common to repeat information. One commonly used structure is X we Yla, which means "after X has Y-ed."

Ji na sitala.	The water boiled.
Ji we sitala, i bɛ se k'a mĩ.	After the water has boiled, you can drink it.

Physical Needs

Formation

To express the English concepts of a person being hot, cold, hungry, thirsty or tired in Mandingo, the structure X ye Y_la "Y is X" (lit., X-is-Y-to) is used. The negative sense of the structure is expressed as X tɛ Y_la "Y is not X". For example:

Tala y'a_la.	He is hot.
Sunɔɔ ye Musa_la.	Musa is tired.
Jilɔ tɛ Fanta_la.	Fanta is not thirsty.
Kɔ̃gɔ tɛ n_na.	I'm not hungry.

Past Tense

To form the past tense for states of physical need, the auxiliary tɛɛ is used for the positive sense and the auxiliary titɛ for the negative sense. For example:

Tala tɛɛ a ba_la.	Her mother was hot.
Nɛnɛ titɛ n kɔlɔmuso_la.	My older sister was not cold.

Demonstrative Adjectives

The equivalents of English 'this one', 'that one', 'these', and 'those' are mĩ kɛlɛ̃, wo kɛlɛ̃, mulu and wulu respectively. They function much like their English counterparts.

Alienable Possession

The majority of nouns in Mandingo are alienable, that is, they are not considered intimately related to the possessor. With nouns this possessive form is made by using the connector y̲a̲. For example:

Seku ya bõ̲	Seku's house
Hawa ya bu̲ku	Hawa's book

The same connector is used with pronouns but like the y̲e̲ in verb phrases it combines with some of the pronouns. While it is helpful to know how these forms arise it may be easiest to just memorize the forms as given.

na bu̲ku	my book
i ya bu̲ku	your (sing) book
a bu̲ku	her/his book
mwa bu̲kulu̲	our books
aya bu̲kulu̲	your (plur.) books
a̲ya bu̲kulu̲	their books

Inalienable Possession

As mentioned in Lesson 1, there are two types of possession in Mandingo, alienable and inalienable. Inalienable nouns include body parts, names for family members, and a few miscellaneous nouns. To mark inalienable possession the following pronoun forms are used.

n	'my'	mɔ	'our'
i	'your, singular'	ai	'your, plural'
a	'her, his, its'	a̲i	'their'

The pronouns are combined with nouns in the following manner:

n kũ	"my head"	mɔ ne̲e	"our tongues"
i bo̲lo	"your hand"	ai kɔ	"your backs"
a kɔ̲nɔ	"her stomach"	a̲i si̲	"their hair"

ka kã

The phrase *ka kã* is translated into English as "must, should, ought to". It is followed by the word *ka* and the verb of the sentence. The negative, "must not, should not", requires the auxiliary *ma*.

I ka kã ka taa lakɔli_la.	You must go to school.
I ma kã ka taa lakɔli_la.	You must not go to school.

ka lõ

The past tense of the verb *lõ* "to know" is used to indicate both the present and past tense English translations. So when *lõ* is used in a sentence its meaning might be unclear. For example:

N k'a lõ.	and	I know him. I knew him.

Generally, the intended meaning will be clear from the context in which the sentence is said.

ka se

The verb *se*, meaning "to be able" or "can", requires the auxiliary *bɛ* in the present tense, positive sense.

A bɛ se ka bu̲ku sã.	She can sell the book.
Fanta tɛ se k'a fo̲.	Fanta can't say it.

ka kɔ

The verb means 'to want, need'. It is unusual in that it often does not take the *-la* suffix in the present tense. Check with your tutor for local usage.

ka fɛ "to want" in complex sentences

In Lesson 6, the verb "to want" was expressed as ka kɔ. This item is used only in simple sentences, such as Fanta ye malo di kɔ "Fanta wants some rice." To express "to want" in more complex sentences, such as "Fanta wants to go to school" ka fɛ must be used followed by the auxiliary connector ka.

Fanta a fɛ ka taa lakɔli_la.	Fanta wants (it) to go to school.
Ai a fɛ ka ya sɛnɛ_lɔ.	They want to come to your farm.

A must appear after the subject for the sentence to be correct. The phrase reads, literally, "They want it...", the "it" referring to the information following the auxiliary ka. Note that the verbs appearing after ka do not require any tense markers. Negation and tense is expressed in the first part of the phrase. For example:

Fanta t'a fɛ ka dɔ̃ni kɛ.	Fanta doesn't want to eat. or Fanta wants to not eat.
Mamadi tɛɛ a fɛ ka taa buku_lɛ.	Mamadi wanted to bring the book.
Abu titɛ a fɛ ka malo tibi.	Abu didn't want to cook the rice.

As you can see, ka fɛ forms its past tense as described in Grammar Note L2. "To want" is a state of being.

2. The Present Progressive

To express the equivalent of the English 'he is ...ing', referring to an activity that is in progress, one generally adds the suffix -la (-na after a verb ending in a nasal vowel) to the verb; for example:

ka kalã	'to read'	E kalãna.	'She is reading.'

Some verbs require that the suffix -li be added to the verb before the -la suffix. Because there is no way to predict which verbs take the -li suffix, they must be memorized. Examples are:

ka sɛbɛ	'to write'	E sɛbɛlila.	'She is writing.'
ka tibi	'to cook'	E tibilila.	'He is cooking.'

Still other verbs form the progressive with the addition of the suffix -to. There are only a few of these verbs. In this lesson you have seen taa 'to go' and na 'to come.'

3. -ni

The suffix -ni was used in several of the personal information questions introduced in this lesson. When attached to the verb it gives the meaning of 'being in the state of'. It is also used in the formation of adjectives (See Lesson 8), so it can be thought of as attributing the quality of the verb to the subject.

I bɔni mĩni?	Where do you come from? Where do you come out of?

You will have noticed that the negative of such verb forms follows the verb, unlike the verbs introduced in Lesson 3, where the negative preceded the verbs.

N bɔni tɛ yano.	I don't come from there.

Simple Past Tense

Most verbs express the past tense in the following way:

1. the positive form uses the auxiliary na after the subject and the suffix -la (-na after nasal vowels) after the verb;
2. the negative form employs the auxiliary ma after the subject.

For example:

Fanta na kini di dɔ̃na.	Fanta ate some rice.
Fanta ma kini dɔ̃.	Fanta didn't eat rice.

Sentences which do not express the past tense using the method outlined above involve postpositions and adjectives. The formation of the simple past tense in these types of sentences will be discussed in Lesson 7.

There is a great deal of dialectal variation in Liberian Mandingo/ Mãniyakã regarding the formation of the simple past tense. If your tutor disagrees with the examples in this book, find out how she/he would express the idea of the past tense and use that form.

Past tense with postpositions, states of being and statives

The past tense of postpositions, states of being and statives is formed differently from that of most action verbs. There is also a difference in meaning. For action verbs, the past tense (as outlined in Lesson 6) refers to an action that took place at one moment in time and then ended, e.g. Mike dropped the stick. For postpositions, states of being and statives, the past tense usually denotes an action that started at one point in time and then continued to occur over some length of time; this past tense is best translated into English as "Hawa was going to school (and is still going)" or "Hawa was talking (and is still talking)."

To form the past tense for *postpositions*, replace the present tense auxiliary *ye* with *tɛɛ* for positive statements, and for negative statements, replace the auxillary *tɛ* with *titɛ*. For example:

Fanta ye mĭni?	Where is Fanta?
Fanta tɛɛ mĭni?	Where was Fanta?
Nisilu̲ tɛ lakɔli_kɔma.	The cows aren't behind the school.
Nisilu̲ titɛ lakɔli_kɔma.	The cows weren't behind the school.

To form the past tense for *states of being* (adjectives) and *statives*, place the same auxiliaries used for postpositions after the stative or the adjective. For example:

N siini n ba̲ fɛ.	I live with my mother.
N siini tɛɛ n ba̲ fɛ.	I lived with my mother.
N siini titɛ n ba̲ fɛ.	I didn't live with my mother.

These auxiliaries, *tɛɛ* and *titɛ*, may also be used with action verbs. The meaning of the sentence will be different. For example:

Fanta na bu̲ku ka̲lăna.	Fanta read the book.
Fanta tɛɛ bu̲ku ka̲lăna.	Fanta was reading the book.
Fanta ma bu̲ku ka̲lă.	Fanta didn't read the book.
Fanta titɛ bu̲ku ka̲lăna.	Fanta wasn't reading the book.

Completive/Narrative Past Tense

The completive or narrative past tense is generally used in relating a narrative or a sequence of events that have been completed. Its use suggests that the events being discussed are in some manner (space, time or experience) further removed from the present than does the use of the simple past tense. (See Lesson 6.) There is a time period where the two past tenses overlap. It is best to use your tutor as the deciding factor of usage.

The auxiliary used to form the completive/narrative past is dependent on the verb.

Most verbs, especially verbs which take a direct object, use the auxiliary ka after the subject. No suffix is attached to the verb.

Examples:

Seku ka malo tibi.	Seku cooked the rice.
Mɔ ka dɛkɛ mina.	We caught the boy.

A small number of verbs, including taa "go", se "arrive", na "come" and dĩnye "agree", use the auxiliary we in their positive form. Again no suffix is attached to the verb. For example:

Fanta we taa.	Fanta left.
Saalu we na so lɔ.	The sheep came into town.

To form the negative, all verbs require the auxiliary ma. For example:

N ma taa.	I hadn't left.
Lasana ma i yɛ kunu.	Lasana didn't see you yesterday.

Imperative Commands

The positive form of the imperative is formed by using the verb alone without a pronoun, e.g.

Taa.	Go.
Na.	Come.

If the verb has a direct object, the direct object, whether a pronoun or a noun, comes before the verb, e.g.

Ya buku ta.	Pick up your book. (lit., your-book -pick up)
A ta.	Pick it up. (lit., it-pick up)

If the sentence includes a locational phrase, such as 'to the store,' 'on the table,' or 'here', the phrase follows the verb, e.g.

Taa tabulo_la.	Go to the blackboard. (lit., go-table-to)
Na yano.	Come here.

The negative of the imperative is formed by using the pronoun 'you' i and the negative word ka, e.g.

I ka ya buku ta.	Don't pick up your book. (lit., you-not-your-book-pick up)
I ka taa da_la.	Don't go to the door. (lit.; you-not-go-door-to)

K.1 Polite Command Form

To make a command less harsh-sounding either (1) add the verb na 'come' to the beginning of the command; or (2) preface the command with the phrase i jŏ 'I beg you' which is the Liberian English form of English 'please.'

Fani ko.	Wash the clothes.
Na fani ko.	Come wash the clothes.
I jŏ, fani ko.	Please wash the clothes.

11.1 The Future Tense

In Mãniyakã the future tense for action verbs, including transitive verbs is formed as follows. (1) *kɛtɛ* is the auxiliary used for positive statements. The suffix -*la* is added to the verb. (2) *tɛna* is the auxiliary used for negative statements. The use of the suffix -*la* is optional in negative statements.

N kɛtɛ kini tibila sini.	I will cook rice tomorrow.
N tɛna kini tibi sini.	I will not cook rice tomorrow.
or N tɛna kini tibila sini.	

The future tense for intransitive verbs, like "go" and "come, is formed as follows. (1) For positive sentence the suffix -*to* is added to the verb. (2) For negative sentences the auxiliary *tɛna* is used. The use of the suffix -*la* is optional in negative sentences.

Kɛnɛya nato kɔtuni.	The sky will be light again.
Kɛnɛya tɛna na kɔtuni.	The sky will not be light again.
or Kɛnɛya tɛna nala kɔtuni.	

Habitual Action

To express the Mãniyakã equivalent of English 'always', there are two options: (1) a simple declarative sentence may be used;

Ni malo dɔ̃na.	I eat rice ('everyday' is implied)

or (2) the phrase *tuma bɛ* 'all the time' can be added to any sentence.

N tɛmalo dɔ̃na.	I never/do not eat rice.

Indirect Objects

In English the indirect object is usually expressed as the person *to* or *for* whom an object is acted upon; "John read the book to Mary," "Michael cooked the food for the children." In English the prepositions *to* and *for* may be understood: "John read Mary the book," "Michael cooked the children the food."

In Mandingo postpositions like *nye* and *ma* are used to indicate the indirect object. Unlike their English counterparts, they must always be present in a sentence. For example:

N nala dɔ̃nifɛ̃_lɛ i_nye.	I am bringing food to you.
A tɛ lɛtɛlɛ sɛ̲bɛla mɔ_ma.	She is not writing a letter to us.

Different verbs may require different postpositions to express the indirect object. It is important to check new verbs with your tutor to know what postpositions are used in your area as the choice is connected with dialect differences. In this lesson the examples employed only *nye* and *ma*, but it is possible that other postpositions may serve the same function.

Postpositions and Their Functions--Culture Note

a. Postpositions fulfill the same function as English prepositions. The major difference between the two being that postpositions follow the noun they modify:

lɔ̲ɔfɛ_lɔ	'to the market'
Abu_fɛ	'with Abu'

b. The noun in the postpositional phrase is followed by a low tone.

c. In general postpositions are not used with names of cities, towns or countries.

N bɔ̲to Gbarngo.	'I came from Gbarnga.'
A siini Ngapa.	'He lives in Ganta.'

d. Certain of the postpositions have restrictions on their use. Nyama 'in front of' is not widely used with non-living objects, i.e., one does not say:

Abu ye sɛnɛ_nyama.	'Abu is in front of the farm.'

rather one would probably say:

Abu ye sɛnɛ_tɔɔfɛ.	'Abu is near the farm.'

Simple Postpositions

The simple postpositions introduced in this lesson are:

la/lɔ (na after nasals)	"to"	kɔnɔ	"in, inside of"
ma	"at, to"	kɔlɔ	"under, underneath"
fɛ	"with"	ka	"on, on top of"
cama	"between"		

K.4 Complex Postpositions

The postposition ma and, to a lesser extent, fɛ, combine with nouns to express directions. The examples found in this lesson are:

banama	"outside"	tɔɔfɛ or dafɛ	"near, next to"
duuma	"on the ground"	kɔma	"behind, in back of"
nyama	"in front of"		

N.1 Instrumental

The instrument of a sentence is the item "by means of which" the action is completed. It is often expressed in English as "by." In Măniyakă this concept is represented by the use of postpositional phrases. It is impossible to predict which postposition will be used in a particular phrase; their useage must be memorized.

Fanta taato toda_la a sẽ_ma.	Fanta is going to town on foot.
A nato Dukɔr takisi_kɔnɔ .	He will come to Monrovia by taxi.
Ai tɛna taala yeno kulŭ_ka.	They will not go there by boat.

1. X ye Y lɛ lɛ or Y lɛ X lɛ

This structure is used to equate one noun or pronoun with a second noun. There is no basic difference in meaning between using one or the other form. However there does seem to be a difference in emphasis, although this is variable among speakers. Ask your tutor if one structure is more common. There is only one negative form, for example mãniya tɛ n lɛ 'I am not Mandingo'.

E sɛnɛkɛba lɛ lɛ.	He is a farmer.
Sɛnɛkɛba l'a lɛ	He is a farmer.
Sɛnɛkɛba t'a lɛ.	He is not a farmer.

ka

The auxiliary ka can be used to conjoin two or more sentences that have the same subject and is often translated as "and"; in negative sentences it may be translated as "or." When the two sentences are joined, only the first verb will reflect the tense of the sentence; the other verb(s) appear in the infinitive form. In general, the sentences that are joined must both refer to actions taking place within a short space of time.

Fanta tɛna baale kɛla sini.	Fanta will not work tomorrow.
Fanta tɛna tibili kɛla sini.	Fanta will not cook tomorrow.
Fanta tɛna baale kɛla ka tibilia kɛ sīni.	Fanta will not work or cook tomorrow.

N.2 ni

If-then constructions begin with the word ni, meaning 'if.' The ni clause employs the auxiliary ka in positive sentences and ma in negative sentences. No suffix is attached to the end of the verb. The 'then' clause employes the usual manner of tense marking. ni may also be translated as 'when.'

Ni n ka malo sã, mɔ kɛtɛ a dɔ̃na nyɔ̃ɔ̃_ye.	If I buy rice, (then) we will eat it together.
Ni n ma wali di Fanta_ma, a kɛtɛ a_bolo.	If I do not give the money to Fanta, she will not have any.

sani

Sani appears at the beginning of a sentence and means 'before.' The auxiliary na is used in the 'sani' clause and no suffix is attached to the verb.

Sani i na na yano, taa lɔɔfɛ_lɔ.	Before you come here, go to the market.
Sani i na buku sɛbɛ, a sã.	Before you read the book, buy it.

nya X ka bã

To express the English concept of 'after X' the Mãniyakã phrase, nya X ka bã is employed. Its literal meaning is 'after X finishes......' It appears at the beginning of a sentence. The suffix -la is attached to the verb following bã.

Nya i ka bã laso kola, i jɛlɛ ko.	After you was the floor, wash yourself.
Nya mɔ ka bã dɔ̃ni kɛla, mɔ kɛtɛ mɔ lala ka nɔ̃ni kɛ.	After we finish eating, we will lie down and rest.

'already'

To convey the concept of having 'already' completed a task, the auxiliary we is used in conjunction with the verb bã 'finish'. There is no actual word in Mãniyakã that means 'already.'

N we bã taala lakɔli_la.	I already went to school.
Ai we bã malo dɔ̃nila.	They already ate the rice.

CHAPTER V

MANDINGO-ENGLISH AND ENGLISH-MANDINGO DICTIONARY

The process of writing a dictionary is a large and tedious process of checking and rechecking entries against usages not only by one speaker, but by many speakers. A good dictionary should contain samples of sentences to illustrate usage of the entry. What follows then by definition is less than a dictionary, but on the other hand it is more than a word list, for it does contain information on parts of speech, dialectal variants and usage. When using this dictionary the reader is encouraged to correct or modify transcription in the light of experience and to make additions when new words are identified.

ABBREVIATIONS

adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
al.	alienable
aux.	auxiliary (appears between the subject and either the verb or the direct object of a sentence.)
conj.	conjunction
esp.	especially
inal.	inalienable
L.E.	Liberian English
lit.	literally
n.	noun
neg.	negative
num.	number
phr.	phrase
pl.	plural
pp.	postposition
pro.	pronoun
prop.	proper
q.w.	question word (used when asking questions)
sg.	singular
suf.	suffix (only used attached to the end of another word)
t.e.	time expression
v.	verb
vs.	versus

DICTIONARY (MANDINGO - ENGLISH)..............a to bama

A.

a	(pro.)	she, he, it, her, him, it
a?		question marker, not commonly used
ai	(pro.)	you (pl.)
a̲i	(pro.)	they, them
alabalõ	(n.)	Wednesday
a̲ladio	(n.)	radio
a̲ladiokaba	(n.)	radio battery
alamisalõ	(n.)	Thursday
a̲lijɛni	(n.)	heaven
Alla	(n., prop.)	Allah, God
allakabõ	(n.)	church, mission *lit.*, God-house *also* jisebõ
amu	(n.)	rice dust
Angili	(n., prop.)	Sierra Leone *also* Freetown

B.

ba	(n.)	goat
ba	(adv.)	yet (used in neg. sentences)
ba̲	(n., inal.)	mother
baabaa	(n.)	termite
ba̲ale	(n.)	work
ba̲alekɛnyɔ̃ɔ̃	(n.)	co-worker
bake	(adv.)	quickly
bala	(n.)	drum
bala	(n.)	naval
balajili	(n.)	umbilical cord
ba̲lamɔɔ	(n.)	relative
bale	(adv.)	very, too (in a positive sense)
ka balo	(v.)	to chat
balokɛya	(n.)	talking place, often an open round building set apart from the house
bama	(n.)	crocodile

banama (pp.)
    outside

basa (n.)
    lizard

ba̲salõ (n.)
    eyeglasses

basi (n.)
    medicine

basikɔlɔ (n.)
    pill

bã (n.)
    desk, bench

ka bã (v.)
    to finish, end

ka bã (v.)
    to be ready, done

Bãdi (n., prop.)
    Gbande, an ethnic group
    in Liberia

bã̲naku (n.)
    cassava

bɛ (adj.)
    all

X bɛ (t.e.)
    all X, every X
    also XX, X o X

bɛlɛ (n.)
    gravel

bɛlɛ (adj.)
    small amount, a little

bɛmɛcɛ (n., inal.)
    grandfather

ka bɛsi (v.)
    to slice, chop

bɛ̃
    good
    also kubɛ̃

ka X bɛ̃ (v.)
    to meet X

ka nyɔ̃ɔ̃ bɛ̃
    to meet one another

bɛ̃kɛ (n., inal.)
    uncle

bɛ̃ni (n., inal.)
    cousin

bi (n.)
    today

bibi (n.)
    hawk

bikɔnɔ (num.)
    ninety

ka bila (v.)
    to put down,
    set down

ka X bila (v.)
    to wear X

ka X bila a kã_ka (v.)
    to put on X

ka X bila a kã_na (v.)
    to put X on

ka Y bila X_ka (v.)
    to add Y to X,
    put X on Y

ka bila X_kɔ (v.)
    to follow X
    (X = a person)

ka bila X kɔ_ka (v.)
    to follow X (X = a thing)
    lit., to put (yourself)
    on X's back

bi̲lafẽ (n.)
    domestic animal

bilafĩ (n.)
black cobra

bilini (n.)
pigeon

biluulu (num.)
fifty

binaani (num.)
forty

ka bine (v.)
ka duniya bine
to be alive
also ka duniya

bisawa (num.)
eighty

biseĩ (num.)
eighty

biwɔɔlɔ (num.)
sixty

biwɔɔlɔ̃wula (num.)
seventy

bĩ (n.)
grass

ka bĩ (v.)
to fall

bĩjɛnɛ (n.)
grass snake

bĩnye (n.)
arrow

ka boli (v.)
ka mɔ̃bili boli
to drive a car

ka boli (v.)
kɔnɔ ka boli
to have diarrhea
(runny belly)

ka boli (v.)
nũji ka boli
to have a runny nose

ka boli ka taa (v.)
to run

ka boli X_kɔ (v.)
to chase, be behind

bolo (n., inal.)
hand, arm

ka X_bolo (v.)
to have X (X = name of
possessor, a common
noun or a pronoun)

ka X_bolo (v.)
cɛ/muso k'i_bolo?
are you married?
lit., do you have a
husband/wife?

bolokanaya (n., inal.)
wrist

bolokɔni (n., inal.)
finger

bololamatolo (n.)
wrist watch

bomba (n.)
bullfrog

boo (n.)
feces, stool

bõ (n.)
house

bõbõ (n., inal.)
chin

bõbõsi (n., inal.)
beard
lit., chin-hair

bõ̲nadẽni (n.)
houseboy

bõya (adj.)
fat, big

ka bɔ̲ (v.)
kɛnɛ bɔ̲ni
day broke, the sun rose

ka X bɔ̲ (v.)
to take some off X,
to lower X's price

ka X bɔ̲ (v.)
ka fa̲ni bɔ̲
to decorate cloth

ka bɔ̲ X ka taa Y
from X to Y

ka bɔ̲ (X_la) (v.)
to come from/out of X

ka bɔ̲ X_lɛ
to go on X, carry X,
bring X

ka bɔ̲ (v.)
k'i kũ bɔ̲
to comb one's hair
(male)

ka X bɔ̲ (v.)
to carve an X (need to
say what is being carved)

ka bɔ̲ (v.)
ka sɛ̲nɛ bɔ̲
to weed (a garden)

ka bɔ̲ (v.)
ka wu̲se bɔ̲
to dig potatoes
ka jabibi bɔ̲
to pick pineapple

bɔlɔ (n.)
bag

bɔɔ (n.)
bowl, plate, dish

bɔ̲ɔ (n.)
soil, clay

bɔ̲ɔ (n.)
swamp

bɔ̲ɔmalo (n.)
swamp rice

ka bɔ̃ (v.)
to spill

ka bɔ̃ X_la (v.)
to resemble X, look like X

bubolo (n.)
mattress, straw bed

bu̲ku (n.)
book
also sɛ̲bɛ

bu̲lu (n.)
bread

-bulu (n., suf.)
leaf (edible)

bu̲lubala (n.)
flute, country band

butu (adv.)
now, right now
also kulalɛni

bu̲yõ (n.)
pig

C.

cama (pp.)
in the middle of,
in the center of,
between
also cɛ

camaya (n., inal.)
waist

cɛ (n., inal.)
husband, man

cɛ (pp.)
between
also cama

cɛmɛ (num.)
one hundred

cɛmɔɔba (n.)
old man (term of respect)

cɛ̃ya (adj.)
good-looking

coya (adj.)
ugly

cɔmɔnu (n.)
old man

D.

da (n., inal.)
price
also sõõ

da (n.)
door

da (n., inal.)
mouth

daa (n.)
pot

daa (n.)
sore

daafolo (n.)
scab

daagbolo (n.)
pus, yellowish, pflegm

daaji (n.)
pus, clear

-daatũ (n., suf.)
cover, lid

dabɔ (n.)
breakfast

dabulu (n., inal.)
cheek

ka dadɛ (v.)
to sharpen

dafɛ (pp.)
near, next to, beside
also tɔɔfɛ

dagbɛ (n.)
white clay, used
for white wash

dagbolo (n., inal.)
lip

dakɔlɔsi (n., inal.)
beard

dala (n.)
dollar

dala kɛlɛ̃ (n.)
one dollar, $1.⁰⁰
also sumu luulu

ka X dalaka (v.)
to open X

ka X dalatũ (v.)
to close X

ka damina X ka sii Y
from X to Y

dawa (n.)
hoe

dayã (n.)
copper

dã (n.)
border

ka X dã (v.)
to weave

k'i kũ dã (v.)
to plait one's hair (female)

dãna (n.)
wall

ka dẽ (v.)
to hang up

ka dɛmɛ (v.)
to help, assist

dɛ̃ (n., inal.)
child

dɛ̃baya (n.)
immediate family

dɛ̃cɛ (n., inal.)
son

dɛ̃muso (n., inal.)
daughter

dɛ̃nyɛnɛ kula (n.)
newborn baby

di (adj.)
some, one particular

di gbɛlɛ (adj.)
another
lit., some-different

di? (q.w.)
how?

ka X di (v.)
to push

ka X di Y_ma (v.)
to give X to Y

ka X di Y_ma (v.)
ka sũ di dɛ̃ni_ma
to breastfeed a child

diini (adj.)
small, a little
also dɔɔni

diini diini (adv.)
slowly
also dɔɔni dɔɔni

dila (pp.)
out of, away from

ka dimi (v.)
to hurt

diya (adj.)
good, sweet, pleasing

dĩnye (n.)
weather, sky
also sãnye

ka dĩnye X_ma (v.)
to agree to X

X do?
what about X?

dolo (n.)
cheek, used in abusive language, 'fat face'

ka domãda X_lɔ (v.)
to hide in X

doobõ (n.)
bar, saloon
lit., beer-house

ka X dõ (v.)
to enter into X

dɔlɔtɔlɔ (n.)
nurse, doctor

dɔlɔtɔlɔbõ (n.)
hospital, clinic
lit., doctor-house
also dɔlɔtɔlɔ

dɔ̱ɔcɛ (n., inal.)
younger brother

dɔ̱ɔmuso (n., inal.)
younger sister

dɔ̱ɔni (adj.)
small, a little
also di̱ini

dɔ̱ɔni dɔ̱ɔni (adv.)
slowly
also di̱ini di̱ini

dɔ̱ɔya (adj.)
thin, young, small

ka dɔ̃ (v.)
to eat

dɔ̃nifẽ (n.)
food

dɔ̃nikafẽ (n.)
utensil
lit., eat-thing

dɔ̃nikɛfẽ (n.)
food

ka dɔ̃nila (v.)
to sing

dualẽ (n.)
mirror

Dukɔr (n., prop.)
Monrovia

duniya (n.)
world

ka duniya (v.)
to be alive
also ka duniya bine

dunu (n.)
load, burden

du̱nu (n.)
rooster

duu (n.)
land, ground

duufĩ (n.)
black soil

duuma (pp.)
on the ground

duunyɔ̃ɔ̃ (n., inal.)
friend

duuwulẽ (n.)
red soil

dũgulũ (n.)
bump (in the road)

E.

etĩ (n.)
fifteen cents, 15¢

F.

fa (n., inal.)
father

fajili (n.)
morning prayer, at 6 a.m.

ka fala (v.)
to tear

ka falabu (v.)
to peel

falagbɛ (n.)
foreigner, Peace Corp volunteer

falagbɛjamana (n.)
America, England, France
lit., white's country

fali gbani (n.)
to have a fever

falifĩbasi (n.)
country medicine

falimatõdɔlɔ (n.)
ringworm

faliso (n.)
body

fana (adv.)
too, also

fa̲ni (n.)
cloth

fa̲ni (n.)
shirt
also kã̲nafani

fa̲nikalaba (n.)
tailor
also tayɛlɛ

fasaa (n.)
vein

fasola (n.)
hometown

fã (n.)
bellows

fãga (n.)
strength

fẽ (n.)
thing

fɛ (n.)
calabash

fɛ̨ (pp.)
with

ka fɛ (v.)
to want (used in complex sentences)

fila (num.)
two

fi̲labulu (n.)
greens, cabbage

ka X file (v.)
to sell X

ka filẽ (v.)
to sprout

ka X fili (v.)
to throw X

fiti (n.)
fifty cents, 50¢

fitili (n.)
evening, evening prayer,
about 7 p.m.

fĩ (adj.)
black

fĩni (adj.)
dark, black

flefle (n.)
butterfly

fo (conj.)
since

ka fo̲ (v.)
to tell, say

k'a fo̲ (v.)
to say it

ka X fo̲ (v.)
ka gbũdo fo̲
to tell a secret

k'a fo̲ i_kɔ (v.)
to say it again , repeat
lit., to say it behind you

ka X fo̲ Y_ye (v.)
to say X to Y, to tell Y X

k'a fo̲ X_ye (v.)
to say to X

k'a fo̲ ko X (v.)
to say that X
(X = a sentence)

ka fo̲ (v.)
ka wia fo̲ X_nye
to lie to X (X = a person),
tell a lie to X

ka foa (v.)
to kill, die

folo (adv.)
still (rare usage)

fõ̲ (n.)
five cents, 5¢
also kapa lu̲ulu

ka X fɔlɔsɛ (v.)
to force X, make X do
something

fɔlɔto (n.)
hot pepper

fɔɔfɔɔ (n., inal.)
lung

fɔtɔ (n.)
picture, photograph,
painting

fɔtɔtafẽ (n.)
camera
lit., picture-take-thing

fɔ̃nye (n.)
wind, air

Freetown (n., prop.)
Sierra Leone
also Angili

fuã (n.)
silver

fufu (n.)
made of pounded cassava
root
also su̲na

fula (n.)
skull cap, prayer hat,
male

fuli (n.)
dirt

fulufulu (n.)
doughnut

funatɛlɛ (n.)
window

funatɛlɛlafani (n.)
curtain
lit., window-cloth

fũde (n.)
steam

G.

gba (n.)
kitchen (outside)

gba (adj.)
hot (temperature)

gba (n.)
booth in the market,
stall

gbabamalo (n.)
upland rice

gbalo (n.)
tree, large, good for
firewood, heavy

ka gbasi (v.)
to hit, knock, strike

ka gbasi (v.)
to beat (especially eggs)

ka gbasi (v.)
ka bala gbasi
to play a drum

ka gbasi (v.)
ka mɔlifa gbasi
to shoot a gun

ka gbasi (v.)
a kɔnɔ lagbasini
she miscarried
lit., her-stomach-hit-itself

gbã (n.)
okra

gbãgbã (n.)
bracelet

gbãgbã (n.)
dust

gbe (n.)
field, open area
also gbeloya

ka gbe (v.)
ka kɔnɔ gbe
to scare birds

gbe̲i (n.)
rubber

gbe̲iji (n.)
latex, rubber sap
lit., rubber-water

gbe̲ijili (n.)
rubber tree

gbeka (n.)
desert, open field
(clear area)

gbeloya (n.)
field, open area
also gbe

gbeyiyamɔɔ (n.)
enemy

gbɛ (adj.)
white

ka gbɛ (v.)
to chase

gbɛlɛ (adj.)
different

gbɛlɛ̃kulu (n., inal.)
knee

gbɛsɛ (n.)
toothbrush

Gbɛsɛ (n., prop.)
Kpelle, an ethnic group
in Liberia

gbi (n.)
owl

gbili (adj.)
hard, difficult

gbili (adj.)
a da gbiliyani
it's expensive

gbiii (adj.)
green

gbiliya (adj.)
soft

gbono (n.)
secret
also gbũdo

Gola (n., prop.)
Gola, an ethnic group
in Liberia

Grebo (n., prop.)
Grebo, an ethnic group
in Liberia

H.

hake to
excuse me

hakili (n.)
intelligence

ka hakilito X_lɔ (v.)
to take care of X

k'i hakilito (v.)
to remember

halijɛni (n.)
heaven

hɛrɛ (n.)
peace

I.

i (pro.)
you (sg.)

Islamya (n., prop.)
Muslim

ĩ
yes

J.

ka ja (v.)
to dry

ka ja tili_kɔnɔ (v.)
to dry in the sun

ka bɔɔlu ja fani_la (v.)
to dry dishes (with a cloth)

jabi (n.)
leaf used to make black dye; used by women on palms and soles of feet for ccsmetic purposes

jabi (n.)
answer

jabibi (n.)
pineapple

jafoba (prop.)
Mano, Gio, ethnic groups in Liberia

jahanama (n.)
hell

jala (n.)
lion

jamana (n.)
country, nation

ka jana (v.)
shout, scream

jãgolo (n.)
sickness

jãgoloto (n.)
sick person

jawa (n.)
onion

jã (adj.)
far, long, tall
also jãya

jãya (adj.)
far, long, tall
also jã

ka jea (v.)
to show

ka Y jea X_ma (v.)
to show Y to X

jese (n.)
thread, cotton

jɛ̲ɛ (n.)
fish

jɛ̲ɛ ja̲lã (n.)
dried fish

jɛ̲ɛminisãzã (n.)
fish net, made of wire
lit., fish-catch-wire

jɛ̲ɛyakɔ (n.)
fish pond

jɛlɛ
self

ka jɛlɛ (v.)
to laugh, smile

ka jɛlɛ X_la (v.)
to climb, go up

jɛli
how much, how many

jɛ̲li (n.)
blood

ka jɛma (v.)
to transplant

ka sia jɛma (v.)
to plow, make a path

jɛnɛ
who

ji̲ (n.)
water

ji̲afe (n.)
glass, cup
also kɔpu

ka jii (v.)
to go down, sink, roll down

ka so ji̲la (v.)
to water

ji̲li (n.)
tree

ji̲lidɛ̃ (n.)
fruit,
lit., tree-child

ji̲lifilẽ (n.)
seedling

ji̲lɔ (n.)
thirst

jisebõ (n.)
church, mission
lit., Jesus-house
also allakabõ

jitali (n.)
guitar

jo (n.)
god

ka jo (v.)
to be right

joona (adv.)
soon

joyakɛba (n.)
trader, merchant
also jula, joya

i jõ̲
please, I beg you

ka jõ (v.)
to beg

jɔ (n.)
large net stretched
across river

jɔɔna
first

jɔso (n.)
pen, fenced area

ju (n.)
vine

ju (adj.)
bad

ka ju (v.)
to take off, remove

jufa (n.)
pocket

jula (n.)
trader, merchant
also joyakɛba, joya

julu (n.)
rope

jumalõ (n.)
Friday

jumasilõ (n.)
Sunday

jumaya (n., inal.)
buttocks

juso (n., inal.)
heart

jusokɔlɔ (n.)
basket

K

ka
negative, command marker

ka
past tense, positive
marker

ka (pp.)
on top of, on
also kɔ_ka

ka (conj.)
and (combines verb
phrases)

-kaba (n., suf.)
battery

kabine (n.)
latrine

ka̲fe (n.)
coffee, tea

kala (n.)
pencil

ka ka̲la (v.)
to sew

ka̲lamɔɔ (n.)
teacher

kalawulẽ (n.)
boyfriend

ka ka̲lã (v.)
to read, study

ka X ka̲lã Y_la (v.)
to teach Y to X

ka ka̲lã kɛ lakɔli_ni (v.)
to study for school

ka kali (v.)
to break

ka kali (v.)
to cut

ka kali (v.)
ka ma̲lo kali
to harvest, pick rice

kalo (n.)
month, moon

kamãji (n.)
woman's gown

kamasɔlɔ (conj.)
because

kami (n.)
guinea fowl

kanape (n.)
bed
also lafẽ

kapa (n.)
copper, coin

kapa kɛlɛ̃ (n.)
one cent, 1¢

kapa luulu (n.)
five cents, 5¢
also fõ̲

ka kasi (v.)
to cry

kawa (n., inal.)
upper arm, shoulder

kawakɔlɔya (n., inal.)
underarm

kawakũ (n., inal.)
shoulder

kã̲ (n., inal.)
neck, throat, voice

i kã̲ ma gi (phr.)
speak slower, softer

i kã̲ na bɔ̲ (phr.)
speak louder

i kã̲ na gba (phr.)
speak faster

ka kã (v.)
must, should,
to have to

kã̲nafani (n.)
shirt
also fa̲ni

keeya (n.)
sickle

kesu (n.)
box
also kesukolõ

kewe (n.)
snail

ka kɛ (v.)
to do, make

ka kɛ nyɔ̃ɔ̃_ka (v.)
to stir, mix together

ka X kɛ Y_kɔnɔ (v.)
to load, put X in Y

ka ba̲ale kɛ
to do work, work

ka kɛ (v.)
ka salãtãnya kɛ
to make noise

kɛnɛ (n.)
light, lightness

kɛ̲lɛ̃ (num.)
one

kɛnɛma (n.)
height

kɛnɛya (n.)
health

ka kɛnɛya (v.)
to get better

kɛtɛ
future tense (positive
marker)

kɛ̃kaamaye (n.)
woman's turban

ki̲le (n.)
grainery

-kili (n., suf.)
egg

ka kili (v.)
to call

kini
before

kini (v.)
cooked rice

kinifileya (n.)
cook shop, restaurant
lit., rice-sell-place

ko (conj.)
that

ko (n.)
business, matter, affair

ka ko (v.)
to say

i y'a̲ ko di (phr.)
what did you say?
lit., you-it-speak-how

ka ko̲ (v.)
to wash

ka bɔɔlu̲ ko̲ (v.)
to wash dishes

ka fa̲ni ko̲ (v.)
to wash clothes

ka laso ko̲ (v.)
to wash the floor

k'i ko̲ (v.)
to wash oneself

koina (n.)
finger-ring

kolã (n.)
light, electric light

ko̲lã (n.)
mortar

komu (adj.)
sour, bitter

Konowari (n., prop.)
Ivory Coast

konyi (n.)
key

ko̲ya (n.)
bathing area

kõ̲gosula (n.)
turtle

kõ̲nyi (n.)
key
lit., door-teeth

kɔ (n., inal.)
back

kɔ (n.)
river

kɔ (n.)
rice bird, one that eats ripe rice

kɔ (n.)
bolt, used to lock a door

ka kɔ (v.)
to want, need

kɔ_ka (pp.)
on top of, on
lit., back-on
also ka

kɔba (n.)
lake, big river

kɔbɔ (n.)
insect

kɔdala (n.)
coast

kɔdɔku (n.)
duck, found in big rivers

kɔkɔnɔ (n.)
water bird, general term

kɔlɔ (pp.)
under, underneath

kɔlɔ (n.)
bone

kɔ̲lɔ (adj.)
old

kɔ̲lɔcɛ (n., inal.)
older brother

kɔlɔkulu (n.)
kidney

kɔlɔmulu (n.)
cutlass

kɔ̲lɔmuso (n., inal.)
older sister

kɔlɔtũba (n.)
bonesetter, one who sets bones

kɔlɔ̃ (n.)
well

kɔma (pp.)
behind, in back of
lit., back-to

kɔnɔ (num.)
nine

kɔnɔ (n.)
bird

kɔnɔ (n., inal.)
stomach

kɔnɔ (pp.)
in, inside of

ka kɔnɔma (v.)
to be pregnant

kɔnɔnafẽ (n.)
net

kɔɔ (n.)
salt

kɔɔ jɛɛ (n.)
smoked fish

Kɔɔji (n.)
Atlantic Ocean
lit., salt-water

kɔpu (n.)
cup, tin measure for grains

kɔsɔ̃ (n.)
wild pig

kɔtuni (adv.)
again

kɔwulini (n.)
waterfall

ka kɔ̃de (v.)
to count

kɔ̃go (n.)
hunger

ka kɔ̃gɔ̃ (v.)
to knock (at a door)
also ka gbasi

kubɛ̃ (adv.)
well, too, very much
(in a positive sense)
also bɛ̃

kuisi (n.)
pants

kuju (adv.)
too (in a negative sense)
also kuyu

kula (adj.)
new

kulalɛni (adv.)
now, right now
also butu

kulu (n.)
spoon

-kulu (n., suf.)
seed

kulũ (n.)
canoe, any ship or boat

kulũwala (n.)
raccoon

ka kuma (v.)
to talk

kunasini (n.)
day before yesterday

kunato (n.)
leper, one who has leprosy

kunu (n.)
yesterday

kuu (n.)
work crew or cooperative

kuyu (adv.)
too (in a negative sense)
also kuju

kũ (n., inal.)
head

ka kũ (v.)
to talk, cry out

kũcama (n., inal.)
head, top of
also kũcamaya

kũkɔlɔ (n., inal.)
scalp

kũsi (n., inal.)
hair (on the head)
lit., head-hair

kũtii (n.)
boss, leader

L.

la (pp.)
at, to, from
also lɔ

ka X la (v.)
to put/lay X down

ka Y la X ka (v.)
to add Y to X

k'i la (v.)
to lie down

k'i la ka nɔ̃ni kɛ (v.)
to lie down and rest

labã
last

Labiya (n., prop.)
Liberia

ka ladã (v.)
to repair, fix

ka lafẽ ladã (v.)
to make a bed

ka X ladɛ̃ (v.)
to collect X, gather

ka nyɔ̃ɔ̃ ladɛ̃ (v.)
to meet, gather for a meeting, come together

lafẽ (n.)
bed
also kanape

ka X lafili (v.)
to throw or shoot (a weapon)

Lagini (n., prop.)
Guinea

ka X lajɛlɛ (v.)
to climb, build, form

ka lakanya (v.)
to be flat, level

lakili (n.)
chalk

k'i da lako (v.)
to brush one's teeth

lakɔli (n.)
school

lakɔlidɛ̃ (n.)
student
lit., school-child

lakɔlikalamɔɔ (n.)
school teacher

ka lakulu (v.)
to make round

lalilõ (n.)
Sunday (rare usage)
also jumasilo

ka lamɛ̃nɛ̃ (v.)
to light (a fire)

laminala (n.)
compound, a group of houses belonging to related individuals and/or families

ka X lano (v.)
to make X stop

lasili (n.)
bunch, pile

laso (n.)
floor

ka sise laso (v.)
to raise chickens

ka X lata (v.)
ka seelã lata
to give a shot/injection
also ka seelã di

ka lataa X ma (v.)
to send to X

ka latɛɛ (v.)
to pick, harvest

lãsala (n.)
afternoon prayer, 4 p.m.

lɛ (adj.)
emphasis marker

Y lɛ X lɛ (phr.)
Y is an X
also X ye Y lɛ lɛ

a lɛ lɛ o (phr.)
that's it, okay, it's settled

X ye Y [illegible] lɛ (phr.)
X [illegible] a Y
[illegible] Y lɛ X lɛ

X lɛ n[illegible] (phr.)
th[illegible] is an X

lɛlɛ [illegible].)
hou[illegible]

lɛmbulu (n.)
orange

lɛmbuluji (n.)
orange juice

lɛtɛlɛbõ (n.)
post office
lit., letter-house

ka bõbõsi li (v.)
to shave

ka lowäse (v.)
to rent

lõ (n.)
day

ka lõ (v.)
to know

lɔ (pp.)
at, to, from
also la

k'i lɔ (v.)
to stand up

k'i lɔ (v.)
to stop oneself

ka gbe lɔce (v.)
to clear the field

ka X lɔci (v.)
to break open X, crack X

lɔ̱ɔ (n.)
market
also lɔ̱ɔfɛ

lɔɔ (n.)
firewood

lɔ̱ɔfɛ (n.)
market
also lɔ̱ɔ

ka lɔsama (v.)
to straighten, stretch

ka lɔsi (v.)
to hoe, cultivate, break up the soil

ka lɔsia (v.)
to accompany, go with
L.E.: to carry

ka lɔtala (v.)
to divide

lɔtɛ (n.)
week

lɔ̃ba (n.)
feast
lit., day-big

lu (n.)
yard

-lu̱ (suf.)
plural suffix,
more than two

lulu̱ (n.)
stars

luma (n.)
yard, compound

lumu (n.)
room (rare usage)

lu̱ulu (num.)
five

I

N

M.

ma (aux.)
past tense, neg. marker

ma (pp.)
at, to

mali (n.)
hippopotamus

malito (n.)
hammer

ma̲lo (n.)
rice, uncooked

mamani (n., inal.)
grandchild

Mano (n., prop.)
Mano, an ethnic group in Liberia

manyɛnɛ (n.)
measles

ka X mapolo (v.)
to miss (not hit) X

ka masili (v.)
to get dressed

k'i masili kubɛ̃ (v.)
to dress well

ka matɛɛ (v.)
to clean

ka duu matɛɛ (v.)
to clean (clear) the yard

m̲ãgolo (n.)
mango, jama plum

Mãniya (n., prop.)
Mandingo, an ethnic group in Liberia
also Mɛ̃niya

mã̲nyi (n.)
paw paw

mãtiie (n.)
lemon

-mã̲tolo (n., suf.)
clock

mbẽ̲ (n.)
horn

ka mɛ̃ (v.)
to understand, hear

Mɛ̃niya (n., prop.)
Mandingo, an ethnic group in Liberia
also Mãniya

mɛ̲̃nye (n.)
driver ant

mina (n.)
deer

ka X mina (v.)
to go on/by X,
to catch, hold

misili (n.)
mosque

mǐ (adj.)
this

ka mĩ
ka basi mĩ
to take medicine (liquid)

ka sigalɛtɛ mĩ (v.)
to smoke a cigarette

k'i mĩ (v.)
to drink

mĩdɛ
what

mĩdɛlɔ
why

mĩfẽ (n.)
drink, liquid
lit., drink-thing

mĩni (q.w.)
where

X mĩni (t.e.)
this X

mõ̲bili (n.)
car, any vehicle

mõ̲biliboliba (n.)
driver, chauffeur
also sɔfɛlɛ

mɔ (pro.)
we, our

ka mɔ (v.)
to get done, ripen;
to be ready, ripe

ka mɔ (v.)
to be angry,
L.E.: vexed

mɔlifa (n.)
rifle, gun

mɔ̲ni (n.)
dish made of rice
and sugar

mɔ̲ɔ (n.)
person

mɔ̲ɔ su mĩdɛ (n.)
ethnic group, kind
of person

mɔ̲ɔ kɔlɔ (n.)
ancestor, old people
(usually deceased)

mɔ̲si o̲ (phr.)
goodbye

mulu (n.)
knife

muso (n., inal.)
wife, woman

musokɔlɔnu (n.)
old woman (term of respect)

mũã (num.)
twenty

mwa (n., inal.)
grandmother

mwaya (adj.)
thick

N.

n (pro.)
I, me

na (n.)
sauce, soup

ka na (v.)
to come

ka na X_lɛ (v.)
to bring

ka na X_lɛ Y_nye (v.)
to bring X for Y, to
come with X for Y

naani (num.)
four

namasa (n.)
banana

namasajã (n.)
plantain

ka X nasa (v.)
to turn off (a light)

ka bõ natɛɛ (v.)
to clean a house,
sweep a house

X nato (t.e.)
next X, the coming X

ka X natunu (v.)
to lose X

nee (n., inal.)
tongue

neĩ (n.)
ten cents, 10¢

nɛɛ (n.)
metal, iron

nɛɛso (n.)
bicycle
lit., iron-horse

nɛlɛkɔlɔsi (n.)
hepatitis

nɛnɛ (n.)
cold, coldness

nɛnɛ (n.)
malaria

ni
if, when

ni cɛ (phr.)
thank you

nisi (n.)
cow

nisiboo (n.)
manure

nisifuruni (n.)
towel
lit., cow-intestine:
(inside of one looks like
towel surface)

nisisoo (n.)
beef

nisitula (n.)
bull
also tula

ka no X_la (v.)
to stop at X

nɔ̃ (adj.)
dirty

nõkula (n., inal.)
elbow

nɔnɔ (n.)
milk

nũ (n., inal.)
nose

Ngapa (n., prop.)
Ganta

no̲o (n., inal.)
intestines

ka nɔ̃ni kɛ (v.)
to rest

nũgbolo (n.)
snot

nya
after

nya̲ (n., inal.)
eye

nya̲ (n., inal.)
a nya̲ wulẽni
her/his eye is red

ka X nya̲ (v.)
to look at X

nya̲gbolo (n., inal.)
eyelid

nya̲loya (n., inal.)
face
l̲i̲t̲., eye-place

nyama (n.)
garbage

nya̲ma (pp.)
in front of
l̲i̲t̲., eye-to

nya̲si (n., inal.)
eyelash

ka X nyaye (v.)
to understand X

nyɛnɛ (n.)
urine

nyɛ̲̃nelekulukulu (n.)
cockroach

nyi (adj.)
good

nyi̲ (n., inal.)
teeth

ka nyili (v.)
to burn

nyina (n.)
rat

ka nyina (v.)
to forget

ka sɛ̲nɛ nyini (v.)
to burn the farm

ka nyinika (v.)
to ask

ka X_ma nyinika (v.)
to ask X (X = a person)

ka nyini (v.)
to look for

nyo (n.)
corn

nyokoma (n.)
cat

ŋalã (n.)
mat

ɔa̲lã (n.)
street urchin

O.

o (adj.)
that
also wo, we

õ-õ
no

P.

ka X pese (v.)
to weigh X

pipo (n.)
man's prayer gown

pitiki (n.)
store, shop

põdi (n.)
nail (for building)

R.

re (n.)
hook (for fishing)

S.

sa (n.)
snake

ka X sa (v.)
to scratch X

ka X sa (v.)
to hollow out

saa (n.)
sheep

safine (n.)
soap

safo (n.)
night prayer, 8 p.m.

ka sala (v.)
to pay

ka X sala Y fɛ (v.)
to pay X for X

salãtãnya (n.)
noise

salo (n.)
molar (tooth)

sama (n.)
message

sa̲ma (n.)
elephant

ka sama (v.)
to bring a gift

samabuli (n.)
turkey

samaji (n.)
rainy season

samakulũ (n.)
airplane
lit., up-canoe

samala (n.)
shoe, slipper

samani (n.)
ivory

samaya (n.)
ceiling
lit., up-place

ka X samã (v.)
to pull

sani (n.)
bottle

sani (n.)
gold

sani
before

sasa (n.)
cold,
L.E.: fresh cold

sawa (num.)
three

sa̲wa (n.)
happiness

sã (n.)
cloud

sã (n.)
year
also sãye

ka sã (v.)
to buy

sãfɛlẽ (n.)
lightning, thunder
lit., rain-with-break

sãfɛlẽkã (n.)
thunder
lit., rain-with-break-voice

sãji (n.)
rain
lit., cloud-water

sãnye (n.)
weather
also dĩnye

sãye (n.)
year
also sã

ka se (v.)
to arrive,
be able, can

seĩ (num.)
eight

selã (n.)
broom

seelã (n.)
needle

senu (n.)
rice bird, one that eats young rice, has a white belly and a black body

sẽ (n., inal.)
leg/foot

sẽ̲ (n.)
bridge

ka sẽ (v.)
to dig

sẽkɔni, (n., inal.)
toe

sẽsɔ̃ni (n., inal.)
toe nail

ka sɛ (v.)
to fight

ka sɛ ka tunĩ na
to wrestle, 'play fight'
lit., fight-play

ka sɛ (v.)
ka dala sɛ
to fight (verbally)

sɛ̲bɛ (n.)
book paper
also bu̲ku

ka sɛ̲bɛli kɛ (v.)
to write

sɛli (n.)
prayer

ka sɛli (v.)
to pray

sɛlifana (n.)
woman's prayer clothes

sɛnɛ (adj.)
clean

sɛ̲nɛ (n.)
farm
also sɛ̲nɛkɛya

ka sɛ̲nɛ (v.)
to plant

sɛ̲nɛbasi (n.)
fertilizer

sɛ̲nɛfẽ (n.)
crop, harvest, vegetable

sɛ̲nɛkɛba (n.)
farmer

sɛ̲nɛkɛwaati (n.)
planting time

sɛ̲nɛkɛya (n.)
farm, garden
also sɛ̲nɛ

sɛ̲nɛlɔ (n.)
village

sɛni (n.)
necklace

sẽtulu (n.)
belt

si
intense negative marker

si (n.)
saw, tool

si (n.)
fly

si (n., inal.)
hair, *esp*. body hair

-si (n., suf.)
seed, *to be* planted, must be connected to food name vs. -kulu (being planted)

ka si (v.)
to sleep, spend the night

ka si X_ma (v.)
to go (reach) to X

sia (n.)
path, road

siaki (n.)
blacksmith, jeweler

siama (adj.)
many

sibili (n.)
Saturday

sibõ (n.)
bedroom

sigalɛtɛ (n.)
cigarette

ka X sii (v.)
to put, place

k'i sii X_fɛ (v.)
to live with X (X is responsible for individual speaking)

k'i sii (v.)
to sit down

k'i sii mõboli_lɔ (v.)
to ride in a car

siifẽ (n.)
chair, porch

siiya (n., inal.)
seat
lit., sit-place

ka X sili (v.)
to put on (a belt or lappa)
lit., to tie on

simbili (n.)
girlfriend

sini (n.)
tomorrow

sinikɛnɛ (n.)
day after tomorrow

sise (n.)
chicken

sisekili (n.)
chicken egg

sisekili tibini (n.)
boiled egg

sisesobo (n.)
chicken meat

sisi (n., inal.)
chest, female or male

sisi (n.)
smoke

ka sita (v.)
to boil

ka sĩdi X_ma (v.)
to give birth to X

so (n.)
horse, general term
also riding, racing horse

so̱ (n.)
town, large village

ka so (v.)
to hit, jerk

so̱bo (n.)
city

-sobo (n., suf.)
meat
also -soo

so̱bo ja̱ni (n.)
dried meat

so̱la (n.)
monkey

solitana (n.)
evil spirit

ka soo (v.)
to pierce one's ears

ka X soo (v.)
to lock
. . . konyi_mɛ 'with a key'
. . . kɔ_li 'with a bolt'

soso (n.)
mosquito

sõ (n.)
thief

sõõ (n.)
price
also da

sɔ̱ (n.)
trap, snare

sɔfɛlɛ (n.)
driver, chauffer
also mõ̱biliboliba

ka sɔlɔ (v.)
to be born

ka sɔlɔ (v.)
ka wa̱li sɔlɔ
to earn money

sɔɔma (n.)
morning

sɔɔmãdala (n.)
early morning, this morning

sɔpu (n.)
shovel

sɔsɔ (n.)
cough

sɔ̱sɔ (n.)
bean

sɔ̃ (n., inal.)
liver

su (adj.)
kind, type

su (n.)
late evening, night

su_lɔ (phr.)
in the evening

Suakokodu (n., prop.)
Suakoko, a city in Bong Co.

sukalo (n.)
sugar

suma (n.)
small circular net, held in hand to use

ka X suma (v.)
to measure

sumaya (adj.)
cold (not used for people or the weather)

sumu (n.)
twenty cents, 20¢

sumu fila ani neĩ (n.)
fifty cents, 50¢

sumu kɛlɛ̃ ani fɔ̃ (n.)
twenty-five cents, 25¢

suna (n.)
fufu, made of pounded cassava root
also fufu

sunɔɔ (n.)
sleepiness, tiredness

surũya (adj.)
short

sũ (n., inal.)
breast, woman's

-sũ (n., suf.)
tree

T.

ta
possessive pronoun marker, used in combination with pronoun, eg. *n ta* 'mine', *i ta* 'yours (sg.)', etc.

ta (n.)
fire

ka X ta (v.)
to take X, pick up X

ka X ta (v.)
ka basi ta
to take medicine (solid)

ka X ta (v.)
ka cɛ/muso ta
to get married
lit., to take a husband/wife

ka X ta (v.)
ka seelã ta
to take/get an injection/shot

tã (num.)
ten

ka taa (v.)
to go

ka taa (v.)
ka taa i nya tilẽma
to go straight ahead

ka taa X balo (v.)
to visit X, to talk to X

ka taa bɔ X_fɛ (v.)
to go visit

ka taa cɛ (v.)
to go get, collect

ka taa X fo (v.)
to go visit X, go talk to X

ka taa i sẽ_ma (v.)
to go by foot

ka taa (v.)
ka taa jɛɛminaya
to go fishing
also ka taa refiliya

ka taa (v.)
ka taa ji_lɔ
to swim

ka taa X_ka (v.)
to go on/by X
also ka taa X kɔ_ka

ka taa X kɔ_ka (v.)
to go on/by X
also ka taa X_ka

ka taa laʔẽ_ma (v.)
to go to bed

ka taa X_lɛ (v.)
to take X, go with X,
carry X

ka taa X_lɛ Y_nye (v.)
to carry X for Y

ka taa (v.)
ka taa soofoaya
to go hunting

ka mõbili taa (v.)
to go by car

taafe (n.)
lappa, cloth measure

takɔbɔ (n.)
lightning bug

ka taama (v.)
to walk

ka taama (v.)
ka taama ka taa X_la
to walk to X

tabali (n.)
table

tabalilamãtolo (n.)
clock, table top

tabulo (n.)
blackboard

takala (n.)
match

takisi (n.)
taxi

tala (n.)
light, general term

tala (n.)
heat, hot, sweat

talalõ (n.)
Tuesday

talɛ̃ (n.)
spider

tama (n., inal.)
jaw

tama (n.)
spear

tamati (n.)
tomato

tana
bad

tayɛlɛ (n.)
tailor
also fanikalaba

tepu (n.)
tape recorder

tẽ (n., inal.)
forehead

tɛɛ (aux.)
past tense, positive marker; used with states of being, including adjectives

ka tɛɛ (v.)
to cut

ka X tɛɛ (v.)
to block (a road), cross (a river)

ka ji̲li tɛɛ (v.)
to cut down a tree

tɛɛlã (n.)
ax

tɛlɛ̃ (n.)
train

tɛna (aux.)
future tense, negative marker

tɛnɛ (n., inal.)
aunt

tɛnɛlõ (n.)
Monday

ka tẽde (v.)
to fan, chaff rice

X to ya(no) (phr.)
X is here

tia (n.)
peanut, groundnut

ti̲bilikafẽ (n.)
stove

ka ti̲bili kɛ (v.)
to cook

ka tilẽ (v.)
to turn

ka tilẽ (v.)
ka tilẽ i bo̲lo bɛlɛ_la
to turn to the right
also, ka tilẽ i bo̲lo kini_ma

ka tilẽ (v.)
ka tilẽ i bo̲lo kini_ma
to turn to the right
also, ka tilẽ i bo̲lo bɛlɛ_la

ka tilẽ (v.)
ka tilẽ i bo̲lo nyumã_na
to turn to the left

k'i bo̲lo tilẽ (X_la) (v.)
to point (at X)

tili (n.)
day, midday, sun, noon

tilibĩ (n.)
west
lit., sun-fall

tilibɔ (n.)
east
lit., sun-come-from

tilima (n.)
dry season

timba (n.)
old farm

timi
how to (do something)

ka timi (v.)
to pass, pass by

ka timi (v.)
to cross, pass thru, surpass, go beyond

ka timi X_ka (v.)
to cross on, over

X timini (t.e.)
last X, the past X

tini (n.)
hill, mountain
also tiniba

tino (adv.)
only

ka timi X_la (v.)
to cross, cross over

titɛɛ (aux.)
past tense, negative marker

titi (n.)
motor road, *esp.* a
coal tar

tĩ (n.)
palm nut

ka tĩĩ (v.)
to be spoiled

tĩtulu (n.)
palm oil

to (n.)
Mandingo dish made of
cassava, mashed and boiled

-to (suf.)
future tense, positive
(limited usage)

ka to (v.)
to stay

ka to (v.)
ka to_kɔ
to stay behind, be late

to̲da (n.)
village

to̲lo (n., inal.)
ear

to̲lolafẽ (n.)
earring

tolosi (n.)
flashlight

tolosikaba (n.)
flashlight battery

tolõtolõ (n.)
bat

tow
other

tõ (n.)
termite mound

tõ̲ (n., inal.)
head, back of

tõdɔlɔ (n.)
worm, parasitic

tɔlɔ (n.)
spring frog

Tɔ̲ma (n.)
Loma, an ethnic group in Liberia

tɔ̲ɔ (n., inal.)
name

tɔ̲ɔ (n., inal.)
a tɔ̲ɔ lɛ X. (phr.)
its name is X,
it's called X

tɔɔfɛ (pp.)
near, next to, beside
also dafɛ

tɔ̃ (n.)
grasshopper, cricket

tu (n.)
high forest

tu (n.)
the bush, woods
(lots of undergrowth)
also tuloya, wa

W.

wa̲ (n.)
the bush, woods
(lots of undergrowth)
also tuìoya, tu

wa (conj.)
but

wa (num.)
a thousand,
wa kɛ̲lɛ̃ 'one thousand'

wa̲ati (n.)
time

wa̲ati jɛli (q.w.)
how long, how much time

wa̲ati mĩdɛ (q.w.)
when, what time

wa̲kɔlɔsobo (n.)
wild animal

wala (adj.)
great, plenty

wa̲la (n.)
leopard

ka wala (v.)
to be plenty

wale (n.)
umbrella

wa̲li (n.)
money

wa̲libõ (n.)
bank

wa̲li misɛ̃ (n.)
change
lit., money-small

wa̲sõ (n.)
crab

wã̲sɔ̃sa (n.)
scorpion
lit., crab-snake

wɛ̃zani (n.)
tree squirrel

wia (n.)
lie

ka X wini (v.)
to spin (thread)

wo̲ (adj.)
that
also o̲, we̲

wolo (n.)
kola nut

wo̲lo (n., inal.)
thigh

woo (n.)
hole

ka woo kɛ (v.)
to operate, to have an operator

wɔ̲ɔlɔ (num.)
six

wɔ̲ɔlɔ̃wula (num.)
seven

wɔsũ (n.)
tree, lightweight,
used to make boats,
doesn't burn well

wɔtolo (n.)
wheelbarrow

wula (n.)
afternoon, evening

wula_la (phr.)
in the afternoon

k'i bo̲lo tu (X_la) (v.)
to touch (X)

ka tu (v.)
to pound (especially cassava or rice)

tuabu (n.)
foreigner
also tubabu

tubabu (n.)
foreigner
also tuabu

tu̲kɔlɔsobo (n.)
wild animal

tu̲la (n.)
bull
also nisitula

tuli (n.)
land frog

ka tuli (v.)
to rot

tuloya (n.)
the bush, woods (lots of undergrowth)
also tu, wa̲

tulu (n.)
cooking oil, grease, butter

ka tulũ (v.)
to be lost
also tunũ

tuma (n.)
time

ka tunĩ (v.)
to play, have fun

ka tunu X_ma (v.)
to get away from X, to lose X

ka tunũ (v.)
to be lost
also tulũ

tu̲u (n.)
muscle

ka kɔlɔ tũ (v.)
to set a bone

tũnye?
really?, for true?

wu̲la (n.)
forest

wulẽ (adj.)
red

wulĩ (n.)
chimpanzee

k'i wuli (v.)
to wake up, get up

wu̲lini (n.)
dog

ka X wulɔ (v.)
to spread X out

wu̲se (n.)
potato

wu̲segbɛ (n.)
sweet potato with
white skin

wu̲sewulẽ (n.)
sweet potato with
red skin

ka wuli (v.)
to finish, to boil

Y.

ya
here
also yano

yano
here
also ya

ye (pp.)
with, to

ye
there
also yeno

yeno
there
also ye

ka X yɛ (v.)
to see X

yɔ̲lɔ (n.)
place

Z.

za̲nu (n.)
rabbit

Zorzorwu (n. prop.)
Zorzor

DICTIONARY (ENGLISH - MANDINGO)

A

able, to be
ka se (v.)

to accompany
ka lɔsia (v.)
L.E.: to carry

to add Y to X
ka Y bila X ka (v.)
also ka Y la X_ka

affair
ko (n.)

after
nya

afternoon
wula (n.)

afternoon, in the
wula_la (phr.)

again
kɔtuni (adv.)

to agree to X
ka dĩnye X_ma (v.)

air
fɔ̃nye (n.)

airplane
samakulũ (n.)
lit., up-canoe

alive, to be
ka duniya bine (v.)
also ka duniya

all
bɛ (adj.)

all X
X bɛ (t.e.)
also X X, X o X

Allah
Alla (n., prop.)

also
fana (adv.)

America
Falagbɛjamana (n.)
lit., whites' country

ancestor
mɔɔkɔlɔ (n.)
(usually deceased)

and
ani (conj.)

and
ka (conj.)
(combines verb phrases)

angry, to be
ka mɔ (v.)
L.E.: vexed

animal, domestic
bilafɛ̃ (n.)

animal, wild
tukɔlɔsobo (n.)
also wakɔlɔsobo

another
di gbɛlɛ (adj.)
lit., some-different

answer
jabi (n.)

arm
bolo (n., inal.)

to arrive
ka se (v.)

arrow
bĩnye (n.)

to ask
    ka nyinika (v.)

to ask X (X = a person)
    ka X_ma nyinika (v.)

to assist
    ka dɛmɛ (v.)

at
    la (pp.)
    also lɔ

at
    ma (pp.)

Atlantic Ocean
    Kɔɔji (n.)
    lit., salt-water

aunt
    tɛnɛ (n., inal.)

away from
    dila (pp.)

ax
    tɛɛlã (n.)

B

back
    kɔ (n., inal.)

bad
    ju (adj.)
    also tana

bag
    bɔlɔ (n.)

banana
    namasa (n.)

bank
    wa̲libõ (n.)

bar
    doobõ (n.)
    also dolobõ
    lit., beer-house

basket
    jusokɔlɔ (n.)

bat
    tolõtolõ (n.)

bathing area
    ko̲ya (n.)

battery
    -kaba (n., suf.)

Y to be an X
    Y lɛ X lɛ (phr.)
    also X ye Y lɛ lɛ

bean
    sɔ̲sɔ (n.)

beard
    bõbõsi (n., inal.)
    lit., chin-hair

beard
    da̲kɔlɔsi (n., inal.)

to beat (especially eggs)
    ka gbasi (v.)

because
    kamasɔlɔ (conj.)

bed
    kanape (n.)
    also lafẽ

bed, straw
    bubolo (n.)

bedroom
    sibõ (n.)

beef
    nisisoo (n.)

before
    kini
    also sani

to beg
    ka jõ̲ (v.)

I beg you
    i jõ̲ (phr.)

behind
    kɔma (pp.)
    lit., back-to

behind, to be (L.E.)
    ka boli X_kɔ (v.)

bellows
    fã (n.)

belt
    sɛ̃tulu (n.)

bench
    bã (n.)

beside
    dafɛ (pp.)
    also tɔɔfɛ

better, to get
    ka kɛnɛya (v.)

between
    cama (pp.)
    also cɛ

bicycle
    nɛɛso (n.)
    lit., iron-horse

big
    bõya (adj.)

bird
    kɔnɔ (n.)

bitter
    komu (adj.)

black
    fĩ (adj.)
    also fĩni

blackboard
    tabulo (n.)

black cobra
    bi̲lafĩ (n.)

blacksmith
    siaki (n.)

to block (a road)
    ka X tɛɛ (v.)

blood
    jɛ̲li (n.)

body
    faliso (n.)

to boil
    ka sita (v.)
    also ka wuli

bolt, used to lock a door
    kɔ (n.)

bone
    kɔlɔ (n.)

bonesetter (one who sets bones)
kɔlɔtũba (n.)

book
buku (n.)
also sɛbɛ

booth (in the market)
gba (n.)

border
dã (n.)

born, to be
ka sɔlɔ (v.)

boss
kũtii (n.)

bottle
sani (n.)

bowl
bɔɔ (n.)

box
kesu (n.)

boyfriend
kalawulẽ (n.)

bracelet
gbãgbã (n.)

bread
bulu (n.)

breakfast
dabɔ (n.)

to break
ka kali (v.)

to break open X
ka X lɔci (v.)

to break up the soil
ka lɔsi (v.)

breast, woman's
sũ (n., inal.)

to breastfeed a child
ka sũ di dɛ̃ni_ma (v.)

bridge
sẽ (n.)

to bring
ka na X_lɛ (v.)

to bring X
ka bɔ X_lɛ (v.)

to bring X for Y
ka na X_lɛ Y_nye (v.)

to bring a gift
ka sama (v.)

broom
selã (n.)

brother, older
kɔlɔcɛ (n., inal.)

brother, younger
dɔɔcɛ (n., inal.)

to brush one's teeth
k'i da lako (v.)

to build
ka X lajɛlɛ (v.)

bull
nisitula (n.)
also tula

bullfrog
bomba (n.)

bump (in the road)
dũgulũ (n.)

bunch
lasili (n.)

burden
dunu (n.)

to burn
ka nyini (v.)

to burn the farm
ka sɛ̲nɛ nyini (v.)

the bush (lots of undergrowth)
tu (n.)
also tuloya, wa̲

business
ko (n.)

but
wa (conj.)

butter
tulu (n.)

butterfly
flefle (n.)

buttocks
jumaya (n., inal.)

to buy
ka sã (v.)

C

cabbage
fi̲labulu (n.)

calabash
fɛ (n.)

to call
ka kili (v.)

camera
fɔtɔtafẽ (n.)
lit., picutre-take-thing

can
ka se (v.)

canoe (any ship or boat)
ku̲lũ (n.)

car (any vehicle)
mõ̲bili (n.)

to carry X
ka bɔ̲ X_lɛ (v.)
also ka taa X_lɛ

to carry X for Y
ka taa X_lɛ Y_nye (v.)

to carve an X (requires that the object being carved be named)
ka X bɔ̲ (v.)

cassava
bã̲naku (n.)

cat
nyokoma (n.)

to catch
ka X mina (v.)

ceiling
samaya (n.)
lit., up-place

one cent, 1¢
kapa kɛ̲lɛ̃ (n.)

center, in the center of
cama (pp.)

to chaff rice
ka tε̃dε

chair
siifẽ (n.)

chalk
lakili (n.)

change
wali misε̃ (n.)
lit., money-small

to chase
ka boli X_kɔ (v.)
also ka gbε

to chat
ka balo (v.)

chauffeur
mõbiliboliba (n.)
also sɔbεlε

cheek
dabulu (n., inal.)

cheek (used in abusive language, 'fat face')
dolo (n.)

chest, female or male
sisi (n., inal.)

chicken
sise (n.)

child
dε̃ (n., inal.)

chimpanzee
wulĩ (n.)

chin
bõbõ (n., inal.)

to chop
ka bεsi (v.)

church
allakabõ (n.)
lit., God-house
also jisebõ

cigarette
sigalεtε (n.)

city
soba (n.)

clay
bɔɔ (n.)

clay, white (used for white wash)
dagbε

clean
sεnε (adj.)

to clean
ka X_ma tεε (v.)

to clear the field
ka gbe_lɔ tεε (v.)

to climb
ka jεlε X_ la (v.)
also ka X_la jεlε (v.)

clinic
dɔlɔtɔlɔbõ (n.)

clock
-mãtolo (n., suf.)

clock, table top
tabalilamãtolo (n.)

to clean (clear) the yard
ka duuma tεε (v.)

to clean a house
ka bõ_na tεε (v.)

to close X
ka X dalatũ (v.)

cloth
fani (n.)

cloud
sã (n.)

coast
kɔdala (n.)

cobra, black
bilafi (n.)

cockroach
nyɛ̃nelekulukulu (n.)

coffee
kafe (n.)

coin
kapa (n.)

cold (not used for people or the weather)
sumaya (adj.)

cold, coldness
nɛnɛ (n.)

cold
sasa (n.)
L.E.: fresh cold

to collect
ka taa cɛ (v.)

to collect X
ka X ladɛ̃ (v.)

to comb one's hair (male)
k'i kũ bɔ (v.)

to come
ka na (v.)

to come from/out of X
ka bɔ (X_la) (v.)

to come together
ka nyɔɔ̃ ladɛ̃ (v.)

to come with X for Y
ka na X_lɛ Y_nye (v.)

the coming X
X nato (t.e.)

compound
luma (n.)

compound, a group of houses belonging to related individuals and/or families
laminala (n.)

to cook
ka tibili kɛ (v.)

cook shop
kinifileya (n.)
lit., rice-sell-place

cooking oil
tulu (n.)

copper
dayã (n.)
also kapa

corn
nyo (n.)

cotton
jese (n.)

cough
sɔsɔ (n.)

to count
ka kɔ̃de (v.)

country
jamana (n.)

country band
bulubala (n.)

country medicine
falifĩbasi (n.)

cousin
bɛ̃ni (n., inal.)

cover
-daatũ (n., suf.)

cow
nisi (n.)

coworker
ba̲alekɛnyɔ̃ɔ̃ (n.)

crab
wã̲sõ (n.)

to crack X
ka X lɔci (v.)

cricket
tɔ̃ (n.)

crocodile
bama (n.)

crop
sɛ̲nɛfẽ (n.)

to cross
ka timi (v.)

to cross
ka timi X_la (v.)

to cross (a river)
ka X tɛɛ (v.)

to cross on X
ka timi X_ka (v.)

to cross over X
ka timi X_ka (v.)
also ka timi X_la

to cry
ka kasi (v.)

to cry out
ka kũ̲ (v.)

to cultivate
ka lɔsi (v.)

cup
ji̲afe (n.)
also kɔpu

cup, tin measure for grains
kɔpu (n.)

curtain
funatɛlɛlafani (n.)
lit., window-cloth

to cut
ka kali (v.)
also ka tɛɛ

to cut down a tree
ka ji̲li tɛɛ (v.)

cutlass
kɔlɔmulu (n.)

D

dark
fīni (adj.)

daughter
dẽmuso (n., inal.)

day
lõ (n.)
also tili

day after tomorrow
sinikɛnɛ (n.)

day before yesterday
kunasini (n.)

day broke
kɛnɛ bɔni (phr.)

to decorate cloth
ka fani bɔ (v.)

deer
mina (n.)

desert, open field (clear area)
gbeka (n.)

desk
bã (n.)

to have diarrhea (runny belly)
kɔnɔ ka boli (phr.)

to die
ka foa (v.)

difficult
gbili (adj.)

to dig
ka sẽ (v.)

to dig potatoes
ka wuse bɔ (v.)

dirt
fuli (n.)

dirty
nõ (adj.)

dish
bɔɔ (n.)

dish, made of cassava, mashed and boiled
to (n.)

dish, made of pounded cassava root
fufu (n.)
also suna

dish, made of rice and sugar
mɔni (n.)

to divide
ka lɔtala (v.)

to do
ka kɛ (v.)

to do work
ka baale kɛ (v.)

doctor
dɔlɔtɔlɔ (n.)

dog
wulini (n.)

dollar
dala (n.)

one dollar, $1
dala kɛlɛ̃ (n.)
also sumu luulu

done, to be
ka bã (v.)

door
da (n.)

doughnut
fulufulu (n.)

to dress well
k'i masili kubɛ̃ (v.)

drink
mĩfẽ (n.)
lit., drink-thing

to drink
k'i mĩ (v.)

to drive a car
ka mõbili boli

driver
mõbiliboliba (n.)
also sɔfɛlɛ

driver ant
mɛ̃nye (n.)

drum
bala (n.)

to dry
ka ja

to dry dishes (with a cloth)
ka bɔɔlu ja fani_la (v.)

to dry in the sun
ka ja tili_kɔnɔ (v.)

dry season
tilima (n.)

duck (found in big rivers)
kɔdɔku (n.)

dust
gbãgbã (n.)

E

ear
tolo (n., inal.)

to earn money
ka wali sɔlɔ (v.)

earring
tololafẽ (n.)

east
tilibɔ (n.)
lit., sun-come from

to eat
ka dɔ̃ (v.)

egg
-kili (n., suf.)

egg, boiled
sisekili tibini (n.)

egg, chicken
sisekili (n.)

eight
seĩ (num.)

eight
biseĩ (num.)

elbow
nõkula (n., inal.)

elephant
sama (n.)

emphasis marker
lɛ (adj.)

to end
ka bã (v.)

enemy
gbeyiyamɔɔ (n.)

England
Falagbɛjamana (n.)
lit., whites' country

to enter into X
    ka X dõ (v.)

ethnic group (kind of person)
    mɔ̲ɔ su mĩdɛ (phr.)

evening
    wula (n.)

evening (about 7 p.m.)
    fitili (n.)

evening, in the
    su_lɔ (phr.)

evening, late
    su (n.)

evening prayer
    fitili (n.)

every X
    X bɛ (t.e.)
    also XX, X o X

excuse me
    hake to (phr.)

it's expensive
    a da gbiliyani (phr.)

eye
    nya̲ (n., inal.)

her/his eye is red
    a nya̲ wulẽni (phr.)

eyeglasses
    ba̲salõ (n.)

eyelash
    nya̲si (n., inal.)

eyelid
    nya̲gbolo (n., inal.)

F

face
    nya̲loya (n., inal.)

to fall
    ka bĩ (v.)

family, extended
    ba̲lamɔɔ (n.)

family, immediate
    dɛ̲̃baya (n.)

to fan
    ka tɛ̃de (v.)

far
    jã (adj.)
    also jãya

farm, old
    timba (n.)

farm
    sɛ̲nɛ (n.)
    also sɛ̲nɛkɛya

farmer
    sɛ̲nɛkɛba (n.)

fat
    bõya (adj.)

father
    fa (n., inal.)

feast
    lɔ̃ba (n.)
    lit., day-big

feces
    boo (n.)

fenced area
    jɔso (n.)

fertilizer
    sɛ̲nɛbasi (n.)

fever, to have a
    fali gbaŋi (phr.)

field (open area)
gbe (n.)
also gbeloya

fifteen cents, 15¢
etĩ (n.)

fifty
bilu̲ulu (num.)

fifty cents, 50¢
fiti (n.)
also su̲mu fila ani ne̲ĩ (n.)

to fight
ka sɛ (v.)

to fight (verbally)
ka dala sɛ

finger
bo̲lokɔni (n., inal.)

finger-ring
koina (n.)

to finish
ka wuli (v.)
also ka bã

fire
ta̲ (n.)

firewood
lɔɔ (n.)

first
jɔɔna

fish
jɛ̲ɛ (n.)

to fish
ka taa jɛ̲ɛminaya (v.)

fish, dried
jɛ̲ɛ ja̲lã (n.)

fish, smoked
kɔ̲ɔ jɛ̲ɛ (n.)

fish pond
jɛ̲ɛyakɔ (n.)

five
lu̲ulu (num.)

five cents, 5¢
fõ̲ (n.)
also kapa lu̲ulu

to fix
ka ladã (v.)

flashlight
tolosi (n.)

flashlight battery
tolosikaba (n.)

flat, to be
ka lakanya (v.)

floor
laso (n.)

flute
bu̲lubala (n.)

fly
si (n.)

to follow X
ka bila X_kɔ
(X = a person)

to follow X (X = a thing)
ka bila X kɔ_ka (v.)
lit., to put (yourself) on
X's back

food
dɔ̃nifẽ (n.)
also dɔ̃nikɛfe

foot
sẽ (n., inal.)

for true?
tunye? (phr.)

to force X
ka X fɔlɔsɛ (v.)

forehead
tẽ (n., inal.)

foreigner
falagbɛ (n.)
also tubabu, tuabu

forest
wula (n.)

forest, high
tu (n.)

to forget
ka nyina (v.)

to form
ka X lajɛlɛ (v.)

forty
binaani (num.)

four
naani (num.)

France
Falagbɛjamana (n.)
lit., whites' country

Friday
jumalõ (n.)

friend
duunyɔ̃ɔ̃ (n., inal.)

from
la (pp.)
also lɔ

from X to Y
ka bɔ X ka taa Y
also ka damina X ka sii Y

front, in front of
nyama (pp.)

fruit
jilidɛ̃ (n.)
lit., tree-child

fufu, made of pounded cassava root
suna (n.)
also fufu

fun, to have
ka tunĩ (v.)

future tense, negative marker
tɛna (aux.)

future tense, positive marker
kɛtɛ (aux.)

future tense, positive (limited usage)
-to (suf.)

G

Ganta
Ngapa (n., prop.)

garbage
nyama (n.)

garden
sɛnɛkɛya (n.)

to gather X
ka X ladɛ̃ (v.)

to gather for a meeting
ka nyɔ̃ɔ̃ ladɛ̃ (v.)

Gbande, an ethnic group in Liberia
Bãdi (n., prop.)

to get an injection/shot
ka seelã ta (v.)

to get away from X
ka tunu X_ma (v.)

to get better
ka kɛnɛya (v.)

to get done
ka mɔ (v.)

to get dressed
ka masili (v.)

to get up
k'i wuli (v.)

Gio, an ethnic group in Liberia
Jafoba (n.)

girlfriend
simbili (n.)

to give X to Y
ka X di Y_ma (v.)

to give a shot/injection
ka seelã lata (v.)
also ka seelã di

to give birth to X
ka sĩdi X_ma (v.)

glass
jiafe (n.)
also kɔpu

to go
ka taa (v.)

to go beyond
ka timi (v.)

to go by car
ka mõbili taa (v.)

to go by foot
ka taa i sẽ_ma (v.)

to go down
ka jii (v.)

to go fishing
ka taa jɛɛminaya (v.)
also ka taa refiliya

to go get
ka taa cɛ (v.)

to go hunting
ka taa soofoaya (v.)

to go on X
ka bɔ X_lɛ (v.)

to go on/by X
ka X mina (v.)
also k'a taa X kɔ_ka,
ka taa X_ka

to go straight ahead
ka taa i_nya tilẽma (v.)

to go talk to X
ka taa X fo (v.)

to go (reach) to X
ka si X_ma (v.)

to go to bed
ka taa lafẽ_ma (v.)

to go up
ka jɛlɛ X_la (v.)

to go visit
ka taa bɔ̱ X_fɛ (v.)

to go visit X
ka taa X fo̱ (v.)

to go with X
ka X lɔsia (v.)
also ka taa X_lɛ

goat
ba (n.)

god
jo (n.)

God
Alla (n., prop.)

Gola, an ethnic group in Liberia
Gola (n., prop.)

gold
sani (n.)

good
bɛ̃ (adv.)
also kubɛ̃

good
diya (adj.)
also nyi

goodbye
mɔ̱si o̱ (phr.)

good-looking
cɛ̃ya (adj.)

gown, woman's
kamãji (n.)

grainery
ki̱le (n.)

grandchild
mamani (n., inal.)

grandfather
bɛmɛcɛ (n., inal.)

grandmother
mwa (n., inal.)

grass
bĩ (n.)

grasshopper
tɔ̃ (n.)

grass snake
bĩ̱jɛnɛ (n.)

gravel
bɛlɛ (n.)

grease, cooking
tulu (n.)

great
wala (adj.)

Grebo, an ethnic group in Liberia
Grebo (n., prop.)

green
gbili (adj.)

greens
fi̱labulu

ground
duu (n.)

groundnut
tia (n.)

Guinea
Lagini (n., prop.)

guinea fowl
kami (n.)

guitar
jitali (n.)

gun
mɔlifa (n.)

H

hair (on the head)
kũsi (n., inal.)
lit., head-hair

hair (esp. body hair)
si̲ (n., inal.)

hammer
malito (n.)

hand
bo̲lo (n., inal.)

to hang up
ka dẽ (v.)

happiness
sa̲wa (n.)

hard
gbili (adj.)

harvest
sɛ̲nɛfẽ (n.)

to harvest rice
ka ma̲lo kali (v.)

to harvest X
ka X_la tɛɛ (v.)

to have X (X = name of possessor, a common noun or pronoun)
ka X_bo̲lo (v.)

to have a fever
fali gbani (phr.)

to have an operation
ka woo kɛ (v.)

to have fun
ka tunĩ (v.)

to have to
ka kã ka (v.)

hawk
bibi (n.)

he
a (pro.)

head
kũ (n., inal.)

head, back of
tõ̲ (n., inal.)

head, top of
kũcama (n., inal.)
also kũcamaya

health
kɛnɛya (n.)

to hear
ka mɛ̃ (v.)

heart
juso (n., inal.)

heat
tala (n.)

heaven
a̲lijɛni (n.)
also halijɛni (n.)

height
kɛnɛma (n.)

hell
jahanama (n.)

to help
ka dɛmɛ (v.)

hepatitis
nɛlɛkɔlɔsi (n.)

her
a (pro.)

X is here
X ti ya(no) (phr.)

here
ya (adv.)
also yano

to hide in X
ka domãda X_lɔ (v.)

hill
tini (n.)
also tiniba

him
a (pro.)

hippopotamus
mali (n.)

to hit
ka gbasi (v.)
also ka so

hoe
dawa (n.)

to hoe
ka lɔsi (v.)

to hold X
ka X mina (v.)

hole
woo (n.)

to hollow out X
ka X sa (v.)

hometown
fasola (n.)

hook (for fishing)
re (n.)

horn
mbẽ

horse, general term
also riding, racing horse
so (n.)

hospital
dɔlɔtɔlɔbõ (n.)
lit., doctor-house
also dɔlɔtɔlɔ

hot
tala (n.)

hot (temperature)
gba (adj.)

hot pepper
fɔlɔtɔ (n.)

hour
lɛlɛ (n.)

house
bõ (n.)

houses belonging to a related group of individuals and/or families
laminala (n.)

houseboy
bõnadẽni (n.)

how?
di? (q.w.)

how long
waati jɛli (q.w.)

how many
jɛli (q.w.)

how much
jɛli (q.w.) ?

how much time
waati jɛli (q.w.)

how to (do something)
timi

one hundred
cɛmɛ (num.)

hunger
kɔ̃go (n.)

hurt
ka dimĩ (v.)

husband
cɛ (n., inal.)

I

I
    n (pro.)

if
    ni

to improve
    ka kɛnɛya (v.)

in
    kɔnɔ (pp.)

in back of
    kɔma (pp.)
    lit., back-to

in front of
    nyama (pp.)
    lit., eye-to

in the center of
    cama (pp.)

in the middle of
    cama (pp.)

insect
    kɔbɔ (n.)

inside of
    kɔnɔ (pp.)

intelligence
    hakili (n.)

intestines
    noo (n., inal.)

iron
    nɛɛ (n.)

it
    a (pro.)

ivory
    samani (n.)

Ivory Coast
    Konowari (n., prop.)

J

jama plum (L.E.)
    magolo (n.)

jaw
    tama (n., inal.)

to jerk
    ka so (v.)

jeweler
    siaki (n.)

K

key
kõnyi (n.)
lit., door-teeth

kidney
kɔlɔkulu (n., inal.)

to kill
ka foa (v.)

kind
su (adj.)

kitchen (outside)
gba (n.)

knee
gbɛlɛ̃kulu (n., inal.)

knife
mulu (n.)

to knock
ka gbasi (v.)

to knock (at a door)
ka kɔ̃gɔ̃ (v.)
also ka gbasi

to know
ka lõ (v.)

kola nut
wolo (n.)

Kpelle, an ethnic group in Liberia
Gbɛsɛ (n., prop.)

L

lake
kɔba (n.)

land
duu (n.)

land frog
tuli (n.)

language
-kã̲ (n., suf.)

lappa (cloth measure)
taafe (n.)

last
labã

last X
X timini (t.e.)

late, to be
ka to_kɔ (v.)

latex
gbe̲iji (n.)
lit., rubber-water

latrine
kabine (n.)

to laugh
ka jɛlɛ (v.)

to lay X down
ka X la (v.)

leader
kũtii (n.)

leaf (edible)
-bulu (n., suf.)

leaf, used to make black dye; (used by women on palms and soles of feet for cosmetic purposes)
jabi (n.)

leg
sẽ (n., inal.)

lemon
mãtilie (n.)

leopard
wala (n.)

leper, one who has leprosy
kunato (n.)

level, to be
ka lakanya (v.)

Liberia
Labiya (n., prop.)

lid
-daatũ (n., suf.)

lie
wia (n.)

to lie to X (X = a person)
ka wia fo X_nye (v.)

to lie down
k'i la (v.)

to lie down and rest
k'i la ka nɔ̃ni kɛ (v.)

light (electric)
kolã (n.)

light (general term)
tala (n.)

light (lightness)
kɛnɛ (n.)

to light (a fire)
ka lamɛ̃nɛ̃ (v.)

lightning
sãfɛlẽ (n.)
lit., rain-with break

lightning bug
takɔbɔ (n.)

lion
jala (n.)

lip
dagbolo (n., inal.)

liquid
mĩfẽ (n.)

a little
diini (adj.)
also dɔɔni, bɛlɛ

to live with X (X is responsible for individual speaking)
k'i sii X_fɛ (v.)

liver
sɔ̃ (n., inal.)

lizard
basa (n.)

load
dunu (n.)

to load
ka X kɛ Y_kɔnɔ (v.)

to lock
ka X sɔɔ (v.)
...konyi_nɛ 'with a key'
...kɔ_li 'with a bolt'

Loma
Tɔma (n.)

long
jã (adj.)
also jãya

to look at X
ka X nya (v.)

to look for
ka nyini (v.)

to look like X
ka bɔ X_la (v.)

to lose X
ka tunũ X_ma (v.)
also ka X̄_na tunũ

lost, to be
ka tulũ (v.)
also tunũ

to lower the price of X
ka X bɔ̱ (v.)

lung
fɔɔfɔɔ (n., inal.)

M

to make
ka kɛ (v.)

to make a bed
ka lafẽ ladã (v.)

to make a path
ka sia jɛma (v.)

to make X do something
ka fɔlɔsɛ (v.)

to make X stop
ka X lano (v.)

to make noise
ka salãtãnya kɛ (v.)

malaria
nɛ̱nɛ (n.)

man
cɛ (n., inal.)

man, old
cɔmɔnu (n.)

man, old (term of respect)
cɛmɔɔba (n.)

mango
mã̱golo (n.)

Mandingo, an ethnic group in Liberia
Mãniya (n., prop.)
also Mɛ̃niya

Mano, an ethnic group in Liberia
Mano (n., prop.)
also Jafoba

manure
nisiboo (n.)

many
siama (adj.)

market
lɔɔfɛ (n.)
also lɔ̱ɔ

married, to get
ka cε/muso ta (phr.)

married, are you
cε/muso k'i_bolo? (phr.)
lit., do you have a husband/wife?

mat
ŋalã (n.)

match
takala (n.)

matter
ko (n.)

mattress
bubolo (n.)

me
n (pro.)

measles
manyεnε (n.)

to measure
ka X suma (v.)

meat
-sobo (n., suf.)
also -soo

meat, chicken
sisesobo (n.)

meat, dried
sobo jani (n.)

medicine
basi (n.)

to meet
ka nyɔ̃ɔ̃ ladɛ̃ (v.)

to meet X
ka X bɛ̃ (v.)

to meet one another
ka nyɔ̃ɔ̃ bɛ̃ (v.)

merchant
joyakεba (n.)
also joya , jula

message
sama (n.)

metal
nεε (n.)

midday
tili (n.)

middle, in the middle of
cama (pp.)

milk
nɔnɔ (n.)

mirror
dualɛ̃ (n.)

she miscarried
a kɔnɔ lagbasini (phr.)
lit., her-stomach-hit-itself

to miss (not hit) X
ka X mapolo (v.)

mission
allakabɔ̃ (n.)
also jisebɔ̃

to mix together
ka kε nyɔ̃ɔ̃_ka (v.)

molar
salo (n.)

Monday
tεnεlɔ̃ (n.)

money
wali (n.)

monkey
sola (n.)

Monrovia
Dukɔr (n., prop.)
also Monlovia

month
kalo (n.)

moon
kalo (n.)

morning
sɔɔma (n.)

morning, early
sɔɔmãda_la (phr.)

morning, this
sɔɔmãda_la (phr.)

morning prayer (at 6 a.m.)
fajili (n.)

mortar
kolã (n.)

mosquito
soso (n.)

mosque
misili (n.)

mother
ba (n., inal.)

motor road, esp. coal tar
titi (n.)

mountain
tini (n.)
also tiniba

mouth
da (n., inal.)

muscle
tuu (n.)

Muslim
Islamya (n., prop.)

must
ka kã (v.)

N

nail (for building)
põdi (n.)

name
tɔɔ (n, inal.)

name
its name is X,
it is called X
a tɔɔ lɛ X (phr.)

nation
jamana (n.)

naval
bala (n., inal.)

near
dafɛ (pp.)
also tɔɔfɛ

neck
kã (n., inal.)

necklace
sɛni (n.)

to need
ka kɔ (v.)

needle
seelã (n.)

negative marker, intense
si (adj.)

negative, command marker
ka (aux.)

net
kɔnɔnafẽ (n.)

fish net, made of wire
jɛɛminasãzã (n.)
lit., fish-catch-wire

net, large (stretched across a river)
jɔ (n.)

net, small circular
(held in hand to use)
suma (n.)

new
kula (adj.)

newborn baby
dɛ̱̃nyɛnɛ kula (n.)

next X
X nato (t.e.)

next to
dafɛ (pp.)
also tɔɔfɛ

night
su (n.)

night prayer (at 8 p.m.)
safo (n.)

nine
kɔnɔ (num.)

ninety
bikɔnɔ (num.)

no
ɔ̱̃-ɔ̱̃

noise
salătãnya (n.)

noon
tili (n.)

nose
nũ (n., inal.)

now
butu (adv.)
also kulalɛni

nurse
dɔlɔtɔlɔ (n.)

O

okay
a lɛ lɛ o̱ (phr.)

okra
gbã (n.)

old
kɔ̱lɔ (adj.)

on
ka (pp.)
also kɔ_ka
lit., back-on

on the ground
duuma (pp.)

on top of
ka (pp.)
also kɔ_ka

one
kɛ̱lɛ̃ (num.)

onion
jawa (n.)

only
tino (adv.)

to open X
ka X da̱laka (v.)

to operate
ka woo kɛ (v.)

orange
lɛmbulu (n.)

orange juice
lɛmbuluji (n.)

other
tow

our
mɔ (pro.)

out of
dila (pp.)

outside
    banama (pp.)

owl
    gbi (n.)

P

painting
    fɔtɔ (n.)

palm oil
    tĩtulu (n.)

palm nut
    tĩ (n.)

pants
    kuisi (n.)

paper
    sɛbɛ (n.)
    also buku

particular one
    di (adj.)

to pass
    ka timi (v.)

to pass by
    ka timi (v.)

to pass through
    ka timi (v.)

the past X
    X timini (t.e.)

past tense, negative marker;
  used with narrative and
  simple past tenses
    ma (aux.)

past tense, negative marker;
  used with states of being,
  including adjectives
    titɛ (aux.)

past tense, positive marker;
  used with simple and narrative
  past tenses
    kə (aux.)

past tense, positive marker;
  used with states of being,
  including adjectives
    tɛɛ (aux.)

path
sia (n.)

paw paw
mã̱nyi (n.)

to pay
ka sala (v.)

to pay X for Y
ka X sala Y_fɛ (v.)

peace
hɛrɛ (n.)

Peace Corps Volunteer
falagbɛ (n.)

peanut
tia (n.)

to peel
ka falabu (v.)

pen
jɔso (n.)

pencil
kala (n.)

people, old (usually deceased)
mɔ̱ɔkɔlɔ (n.)

person
mɔ̱ɔ (n.)

pflegm
da̱agbolo (n.)

photography
fɔtɔ (n.)

to pick X
ka X_la tɛɛ (v.)

to pick pineapple
ka jabibi bɔ̱ (v.)

to pick rice
ka ma̱lo kali (v.)

to pick X up
ka X ta (v.)

picture
fɔtɔ (n.)

to pierce one's ears
ka soo (v.)

pig
bu̱yõ (n.)

pig, wild
kɔ̱sɔ̃ (n.)

pigeon
bilini (n.)

pile
lasili (n.)

pill
basikɔˀɔ (n.)

pineapple
jabibi (n.)

place
yɔ̱lɔ (n.)

to place
ka X sii (v.)

to plait one's hair (female)
k'i kũ dã (v.)

to plant
ka sɛ̱nɛ (v.)

plantain
namasajã (n.)

planting time
sɛ̱nɛkɛwaati (n.)

plate
bɔɔ (n.)

to play
ka tunĩ (v.)

to play a drum
ka bala gbasi (v.)

to 'play fight'
ka sɛ ka tunĩ na (v.)
lit., fight-play

please
i jõ

pleasing
diya (adj.)

plenty
wala (adj.)

plenty, to be
ka wala (v.)

to plow
ka sia jɛma (v.)

plural suffix, more than two
-lu (suf.)

pocket
jufa (n.)

to point (at X)
k'i bolo tilẽ (X_la) (v.)

porch
siifẽ (n.)

possessive pronoun marker; used in combination with pronoun, e.g., n ta 'mine', i ta 'yours (sg.)', etc.
ta

post office
lɛtɛlɛbõ (n.)
lit., letter-house

pot
daa (n.)

potato
wuse (n.)

to pound (esp. cassava or rice)
ka tu (v.)

to pray
ka sɛli (v.)

prayer
sɛli (n.)

prayer, afternoon (at 4 p.m.)
lãsala (n.)

prayer, night (at 8 p.m.)
safo (n.)

prayer clothes, female
sɛlifana (n.)

prayer gown, male
pipo (n.)

prayer hat, male
fula (n.)

pregnant, to be
ka kɔnɔma (v.)

price
da (n., inal.)
also sõõ (n., al.)

to pull
ka X samã (v.)

pus, clear
daaji (n.)

pus, yellowish
daagbolo (n.)

to push X
ka X di (v.)

to put
ka X sii (v.)

to put down
ka X bila (v.)
also ka X la

to put X in Y
ka X kɛ Y_kɔnɔ (v.)

to put on X
ka X bila a kã_ka (v.)
also ka X bila a kã_na

to put X on Y
ka Y bila X_ka (v.)

to put on (a belt or a lappa)
    ka X sili (v.)
    lit., to tie on

Q

question marker (not commonly used)
    a?

quickly
    bake (adv.)

R

rabbit
    za̱nu (n.)

raccoon
    kulũwala (n.)

radio
    a̱ladio (n.)

radio battery
    a̱ladiokaba (n.)

rain
    sãji (n.)
    lit., cloud-water

rainy season
    samaji (n.)

to raise chickens
    ka si̱se laso (v.)

rat
    nyina (n.)

to read
    ka ka̱lã (v.)

ready, to be
    ka bã (v.)
    also ka mɔ, ka mɔɔya

really?
    tũnye? (q.w.)

red
    wulẽ (adj.)

relative
    ba̱lamɔɔ (n.)

to remember
    k'i hakilito (v.)

to remove
    ka ju (v.)

to rent
    ka lowãse (v.)

to repair
ka ladã (v.)

to repeat it
k'a fo̱ i_kɔ (v.)

to resemble X
ka bɔ̃ X_la (v.)

to rest
ka nɔ̃ni kɛ (v.)

restaurant
kinifileya (n.)
lit., rice-sell-place

rice, cooked
kini (n.)

rice, swamp
bɔ̱ɔ̱malo (n.)

rice, uncooked
ma̱lo (n.)

rice, upland
gbabamalo (n.)

rice bird, one that eats
ripe rice
kɔ (n.)

rice bird, one that eats young
rice, has a white belly and a
black body
senu (n.)

rice dust
amu (n.)

to ride in a car
k'i sii mo̱boli_lɔ (v.)

rifle
mɔlifa (n.)

right, to be
ka jo (v.)

right now
butu (adv.)
also kulalɛni

ringword
falimatɔ̃dɔlɔ (n.)

ripe, to be
ka mɔ (v.)
also ka mɔɔya

ripe, to get
ka mɔ (v.)

to rise, the sun rose
kɛnɛ bɔ̱ni (phr.)

river
kɔ (n.)

river, big
kɔba (n.)

road
sia (n.)

to roll down
ka jii (v.)

room (rare usage)
lumu (n.)

rooster
du̱nu (n.)

rope
julu (n.)

to rot
ka tuli (v.)

round, to make
ka lakulũ (v.)

rubber
gbe̱i (n.)

rubber sap
gbe̱iji (n.)
lit., rubber-water

rubber tree
gbe̲ijili (n.)

to run
ka boli ka taa (v.)

to have a runny nose
nũji ka boli (phr.)

S

saloon
doobõ (n.)
also dolobõ
lit., beer-house

salt
kɔ̲ɔ̲ (n.)

Saturday
sibili (n.)

sauce
na̲ (n.)

saw (tool)
si (n.)

to say
ka fo̲ (v.)
also ka ko (v.)

to say it
k'a fo̲ (v.)

to say X to Y
ka X fo̲ Y_ye (v.)

to say (it) to X
k'a fo̲ X_ye (v.)

to say it again
k'a fo̲ i_kɔ
lit., to say it behind you

to say that X (X = a sentence)
k'a fo̲ ko X

what did you say?
i y'a ko di? (phr.)
lit., you-it-speak-how

scab
da̲afolo (n.)

scalp
kũkɔlɔ (n., inal.)

to scare birds
ka kɔnɔ gbɛ (v.)

school	lakɔli (n.)
school teacher	lakɔlikalamɔɔ (n.)
scorpion	wãsõsɔ (n.) lit., crab-snake
to scratch X	ka X sa (v.)
to scream	ka jana (v.)
seat	siiya (n., inal.) lit., sit-place
secret	gbono (n.) also gbũdo
to see X	ka X yɛ̃ (v.)
seed	-kulu (n., suf.)
seed, to be planted, must be connected to food name vs. -kolo (being planted)	-si (n., suf.)
seedling	jilifilẽ (n.)
self	jɛlɛ (n.)
to sell X	ka X file (v.)
to send to X	ka lataa X_ma (v.)
to set a bone	ka kɔlɔ tũ (v.)
to set down	ka bila (v.)
it's settled	a lɛ lɛ o (phr.)
seven	wɔɔlɔ̃wula (num.)
seventy	biwɔɔlɔ̃wula (num.)
to sew	ka kala (v.)
to sharpen	ka dadɛ (v.)
to shave	ka bõbõsi li (v.)
she	a (pro.)
sheep	saa (n.)
shirt	fani (n.) also kãnafani
shoe	samala (n.)
to shoot a gun	ka mɔlifa gbasi (v.)
to shoot X (X = a weapon)	ka X lafili (v.)
shop	pitiki (n.)
short	surũya (adj.)
should	ka kã ka (v.)

shoulder
kawa (n., inal.)
also kawakũ

shout
ka jana (v.)

shovel
sɔpu (n.)

to show
ka jea (v.)

to show Y to X
ka Y jea X_ma (v.)

sick person
jãgoloto (n.)

sickle
keeya (n.)

sickness
jãgolo (n.)

Sierra Leone
Angili (n., prop.)
also Freetown

silver
fuã (n.)

since
fo (conj.)

to sing
ka dɔ̃ɔ̃nila (v.)

to sink
ka jii (v.)

sister, older
kɔ̱lɔmuso (n., inal.)

sister, younger
dɔ̱ɔmuso (n., inal.)

to sit down
k'i sii (v.)

six
wɔ̱ɔlɔ (num.)

sixty
biwɔ̱ɔlɔ (num.)

skull cap (male)
fula (n.)

sky
dĩnye (n.)
also sãnye

to sleep
ka si (v.)

sleepiness
sunɔɔ (n.)

to slice
ka bɛsi (v.)

slipper
samala (n.)

slowly
di̱ini di̱ini (adv.)
also dɔ̱ɔni dɔ̱ɔni

small
di̱ini (adj.)
also dɔ̱ɔni

small
dɔ̱ɔya (adj.)

small amount
bɛlɛ (adj.)

to smile
ka jɛlɛ (v.)

smoke
sisi (n.)

to smoke a cigarette
ka sigalɛtɛ mĩ (v.)

snail
kewe (n.)

snake	sa (n.)
snare	sɔ̱ (n.)
snot	nũgbolo (n., inal.)
soap	safine (n.)
soft	gbiliya (adj.)
soil	bɔ̱ɔ (n.)
soil, black	duufĩ (n.)
soil, red	duuwulẽ (n.)
some	di (adj.)
son	dɛ̱̃cɛ (n., inal.)
soon	joona (adv.)
sore	da̱a (n.)
soup	na̱ (n.)
sour	komu (adj.)
speak faster	i kã̱ na gba (phr.)
speak louder	i kã̱ na bɔ (phr.)
speak slower	i kã̱ ma gi (phr.)
speak softer	i kã̱ ma gi (phr.)
spear	tama (n.)
to spend the night	ka si (v.)
spider	ta̱lɛ̃ (n.)
to spill	ka bɔ̃ (v.)
to spin (thread)	ka X wini (v.)
spirit, evil	solitana (n.)
spoiled, to be	ka tĩĩ (v.)
spoon	kulu (n.)
to spread X out	ka X wulɔ (v.)
spring frog	tɔlɔ (n.)
to sprout	ka filẽ (v.)
stall (in the market)	gba̱ (n.)
to stand up	k'i lɔ (v.)
stars	lulu̱ (n.)

to stay
ka to (v.)

to stay behind
ka to_kɔ (v.)

steam
fũde (n.)

still
folo (adv.)
(rare usage)

to stir
ka kɛ nyɔ̃ɔ̃_ka (v.)

stomach
kɔnɔ (n., inal.)

stool, feces
boo (n.)

to stop at X
ka no X_la (v.)

to stop oneself
k'i lɔ (v.)

to make X stop
ka X lano (v.)

store
pitiki (n.)

stove
tibilikafẽ (n.)

to straighten
ka lɔsama (v.)

street urchin
ŋalã (n.)

strength
fãga (n.)

to stretch
ka lɔsama (v.)

to strike
ka gbasi (v.)

student
lakɔlidẽ (n.)
lit., school-child

to study
ka kalã (v.)

to study for school
ka kalã kɛ lakɔli_ni (v.)

Suakoko, a city in Bong Co.
Suakokodu (n., prop.)

sun
tili (n.)

Sunday
jumasilõ (n.)
also lalilõ (rare usage)

to surpass
ka timi (v.)

swamp
bɔɔ (n.)

swamp rice
bɔɔmalo (n.)

sweat
tala (n.)

to sweep a house
ka bõ_na tɛɛ (v.)

sweet
diya (adj.)

sweet potato with red skin
wusewulẽ (n.)

sweet potato with white skin
wusegbɛ (n.)

to swim
ka taa ji_lɔ (v.)

T

table
tabali (n.)

tailor
fanikalaba (n.)
also tayɛlɛ

to take X
ka X ta (v.)
also ka taa X_lɛ

to take an injection/shot
ka seelã ta (v.)

to take medicine (liquid)
ka basi mĩ (v.)

to take medicine (solid)
ka basi ta (v.)

to take care of X
ka hakilito X_lɔ (v.)

to take off
ka ju (v.)

to take some off X
ka X bɔ (v.)

to talk
ka kuma (v.)
also ka kũ

to talk to X
ka taa X balo (v.)

talking place (often an open round building set apart from the house)
balokɛya (n.)

tall
jã (adj.)
also jãya

tape recorder
tepu (n.)

taxi
takisi (n.)

tea
kafe (n.)

to teach Y to X
ka X kalã Y_la (v.)

teacher
kalamɔɔ (n.)

to tear
ka fala (v.)

teeth
nyi (n., inal.)

to tell
ka fo (v.)

to tell Y X
ka X fo Y_ye (v.)

to tell a lie to X
ka wia fo X_nye (v.)

to tell a secret
ka gbũdo fo (v.)

ten
tã (num.)

ten cents, 10¢
neĩ (n.)

termite
baabaa (n.)

termite mound
tõ (n.)

thank you
ni cɛ (phr.)

that
ko (conj.)

that
mĩ (adj.)

that
o (adj.)
also wo

that's it
a lɛ lɛ o̲ (phr.)

them
a̲i (pro.)

there
ye
also yeno

they
a̲i (pro.)

thick
mwaya (adj.)

thief
sõ (n.)

thigh
wo̲lo (n., inal.)

thin
dɔ̲ɔya (adj.)

thirst
ji̲lɔ (n.)

thirty
bisawa (num.)

this X
X mĩni (t.e.)

this is an X
X lɛ ni (phr.)

one thousand
wa kɛ̲lɛ̃ (num.)

thread
jese (n.)

three
sawa (num.)

throat
kã̲ (n., inal.)

to throw X (X = weapon)
ka X lafili (v.)

to throw X
ka X fili (v.)

thunder
sãfɛlɛ̃kã (n.)
lit., rain-with-break-voice

Thursday
alamisalõ (n.)

time
tuma (n.)
also wa̲ati

tiredness
sunɔɔ (n.)

to
la (pp.)
also lɔ, ma, ye

today
bi (n.)

toe
sẽkɔni (n., inal.)

toe nail
sẽsõni (n., inal.)

tomato
tamati (n.)

tomorrow
sini (n.)

tongue
ne̲e (n., inal.)

too
fana (adv.)

too (in a negative sense)
kuju (adv.)
also kuyu

too (in a positive sense)
kubɛ̃ (adv.)
also bɛ̃, bale

toothbrush
gbɛsɛ (n.)

top (on top of)
ka (pp.)
also kɔ_ka

to touch (X)
k'i bo̲lo tu (X_la) (v.)

towel
nisifuruni (n.)
lit., cow-intestine: inside of one looks like towel surface

town
so̲ (n.)

to transplant
ka jɛma (v.)

trader
joyakɛba (n.)
also jula, joya

train
tɛlɛ̃ (n.)

trap
sɔ̲ (n.)

tree
ji̲li (n.)

tree
-sũ (n., suf.)

tree (a large heavy one, good for firewood)
gbalo (n.)

tree (lightweight, used to make boats, doesn't burn well)
wɔsũ (n.)

tree squirrel
wɛ̃zani (n.)

woman's turban
kɛ̃kaamaye (n.)

Tuesday
talalõ (n.)

turkey
samabuli (n.)

to turn
ka tilẽ (v.)

to turn off (a light)
ka X nasa (v.)

to turn to the left
ka tilẽ i bo̲lo nyumã_na (phr.)

to turn to the right
ka tilẽ i bo̲lo bɛlɛ_la (phr.)
also ka tilẽ i bo̲lo kini_ma

turtle
kõ̲gosula (n.)

twenty
mũã (num.)

twenty cents, 20¢
su̲mu (n.)

twenty-five cents, 25¢
su̲mu kɛ̲lɛ̃ ani fõ̲ (n.)

two
fila (num.)

type
su (adj.)

U

ugly
    coya (adj.)

umbilical cord
    balajili (n.)

umbrella
    wale (n.)

uncle
    bɛ̃kɛ (n., inal.)

under
    kɔlɔ (pp.)

underarm
    kawakɔlɔya (n., inal.)

underneath
    kɔlɔ (pp.)

to understand
    ka mɛ̃ (v.)

to understand X
    ka X nyaye (v.)

upper arm
    kawa (n., inal.)

urine
    nyɛnɛ (n.)

utensil
    dɔ̃nikafẽ (n.)
    lit., eat-thing

V

vegetable
    sɛ̲nɛfẽ (n.)

very (in a positive sense)
    bale (adv.)

very much (in a positive sense)
    kubɛ̃ (a̲dv.)
    also bɛ̃

vein
    fasaa (n.)

village
    sɛnɛlɔ (n.)
    also to̲da

vine
    ju (n.)

to visit X
    ka taa X balo (v.)

voice
    kã̲ (n., inal.)

W

waist
camaya (n., inal.)

to wake up
k'i wuli (v.)

to walk
ka taama (v.)

to walk to X
ka taama ka taa X_la (v.)

wall
dãna (n.)

to want (used in complex sentences)
ka fɛ (v.)

to want
ka kɔ (v.)

to wash
ka ko̱ (v.)

to wash oneself
k'i ko̱ (v.)

to wash clothes
ka fa̱ni ko̱ (v.)

to wash dishes
ka bɔɔlu̱ ko̱ (v.)

to wash the floor
ka laso ko̱ (v.)

water
ji̱ (n.)

to water
ka so ji̱la (v.)

waterbird (general term)
kɔkɔnɔ (n.)

waterfall
kɔwulini (n.)

we
mɔ (pro.)

to wear X
ka X bila (v.)

weather
sãnye (n.)
also dĩnye

to weave
ka X dã (v.)

Wednesday
alabalõ (n.)

to weed (a garden)
ka X bɔ̱ (v.)
also ka sɛ̱nɛ bɔ̱

week
lɔtɛ (n.)

to weigh X
ka X pese (v.)

well
kɔ̱lɔ̃ (n.)

well (in a positive sense)
kubɛ̃ (adv.)
also bɛ̃

west
tilibĩ (n.)
lit., sun-fall

what
mĩdɛ (q.w.)

what about X?
X do? (q.w.)

what time?
wa̱ati mĩdɛ? (q.w.)

wheelbarrow
wɔtolo (n.)

when
waati mĩdɛ (q.w.)

when
ni

where
mĩni (q.w.)

white
gbɛ (adj.)

who
jɛnɛ (q.w.)

why
mĩdɛlɔ (q.w.)

wife
muso (n., inal.)

will (future tense, positive)
kɛtɛ (aux.)

will not (future tense, negative)
tɛna (aux.)

wind
fɔ̃nye (n.)

window
funatɛlɛ (n.)

with
fɛ (pp.)
also ye

woman
muso (n., inal.)

woman, old (term of respect)
musokɔlɔnu (n.)

woods (lots of undergrowth)
tuloya (n.)
also tu, wa

work
baale (n.)

to work
ka baale kɛ (v.)

work crew or cooperative
kuu (n.)

world
duniya (n.)

worm, parasitic
tõdɔlɔ (n.)

to wrestle
ka sɛ ka tunĩ na
lit., fight-play

wrist
bolokanaya (n., inal.)

wrist watch
bololamãtolo (n.)

to write
ka sɛbɛli kɛ (v.)

Y

yard
    lu (n.)

yard, in the
    luma (pp.)

year
    sã (n.)
    also sãye

yes
    ĩ

yesterday
    kunu (n.)

yet
    ba (adv.)
    (used in neg. sentences)

you (sg.)
    i (pro.)

you (pl.)
    ai (pro.)

young
    dɔ̱ɔya (adj.)

Z

Zorzor
    Zorzorwu (n., prop.)

CHAPTER VI

LEARNING THE SOUND SYSTEM OF MANDE LANGUAGES

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to provide a deeper basis for the understanding of the sound systems of the Mande languages of Liberia. Although every attempt has been made to reduce the amount of technical language used to convey the information in this chapter, it has not been eliminated altogether, for what is used is felt to be necessary for the presentation.

Nevertheless, what follows can be followed by an enthusiastic reader with no previous training in linguistics or language learning. For those seeking only further practice in the recognition of the phonetic distinctions found in Mande it is possible to skip directly to section F where there are listening exercises which may be carried out with the accompanying cassette tape. Then, if there is some confusion about the nature of the sound contrast being studied, the learner may then refer back to the section which discusses the nature of this contrast.

B. THE SYSTEM OF SOUNDS

A language consists of three major subsystems. It has an inventory of words known as a lexicon. It has a set of rules by which these words are arranged into sentences, known as syntax. Finally it has a sound system which consists of a set of discrete contrastive sounds, known as phonemes. Phonemes, or rather strings of phonemes are used to render words as sound images so that they may be spoken and understood. This chapter is about how those sounds are organized and understood.

While phonemes are written using Roman alphabetic characters, they should not be confused with the letters used to write English. These are non-phonemic, because they violate the principle that a phoneme stands for only one contrastive sound. The following examples illustrate that the English alphabet violates this condition.

Letter	Sound	Word
s	s	see
	z	raise
	ž	measure
c	s	city
	k	cow
o	a	pod
	ɔ	log
	i	women
	ow	smoke

Because of these discrepancies, English is not perfectly phonemic which means that it is not always possible to determine how a word is going to be pronounced (given its spelling) or written (given its sound). Because of these indeterminancies in the writing system of English and many other written languages, linguists have found it useful to develop a phonemic writing system to use when analyzing a language. This writing system is also of value to learners of a language because it eliminates the guesswork in reading and writing in the language.

When you first hear a new language, you will first note that it is made up of a series of syllables. The syllable is a good place to begin breaking down the sounds of language because all three major phonetic elements: consonants, vowels and suprasegmental features are associated with the syllable.

At the heart of the syllable is a syllabic unit which is generally, though not always (as is pointed out later) a vowel. Vowels are sounds that receive their distinctive acoustical properties through the resonant properties of the mouth (oral cavity) and the throat (pharyngeal cavity) through adjustments of the tongue, tongue root, lips and jaw. The various resonances produced by these different oral shapes can be explained by the same principle as the resonant sound produced by blowing on a beer bottle, though the resonances produced by the more complex shapes of the vocal tract are of course more complex.

C. VOWELS

1. Classification

Linguists find it useful to classify vowels by:

a) the location of the tongue:

1. Is it toward the front of the mouth or
2. is it toward the back of the mouth?

b) the location of the jaw:

1. Is the jaw closed so that the tongue is high in the mouth or
2. is the jaw open so that the tongue is low in the mouth?

c) the shape of the lips:

1. Are the lips rounded or
2. are the lips unrounded?

The reason for this classification is that linguists have found that vowels that share common properties, (i.e. high vowels, front vowels or rounded vowels tend to function alike as we will show later). The classification of the vowels used in the Mande languages in Liberia is given in the following chart.

	Front	Back	Back & Rounded
High	i	ɨ	u
High Mid	e	ë	o
Low Mid	ɛ	ʌ	ɔ
Low	(æ)	a	

None of these sounds exactly like those of English therefore the following equivalents should only be taken provisionally, to help you learn to recognize the sounds associated with the symbols. Drills are given in section F to familiarize you with the use of this system in transcribing Mande sounds.

2. Description of Individual Vowels

2.1 The front, unrounded vowels:

/i/ bee, neat, tidy, me

The English vowel differs from the Mande /i/*, by being glided, that is, followed by y a semivowel (see below). Thus the word bee when transcribed phonetically is /biy/. If you say this word slowly, you may sense the /y/ at the end of the vowel.

Due to historical change, English words spelled with an i (e.g. bite) are no longer pronounced with an i (ee sound) but rather an eye sound. In making the transition to the phonemic writing system you may confuse the orthographic i (eye) and the phonemic /i/ (ee).

/e/ ("closed e") day, take, say

The English vowel differs from the Mande e in that it is glided, like the high vowel, it is followed by a y semivowel (see below). Thus the English word day, when transcribed phonetically, is /dey/ or perhaps /dɛy/. You can detect this y glide by saying the word day very slowly. You will note that while you start on the vowel /e/, you end with the vowel /i/. In learning to say this vowel say it slowly and cut off the y "offglide". For many speakers, the first part of the vowel is lower (closer to a phonetic /ɛ/) than a phonetic /e/. You can approximate the higher and tenser /e/ by tightening your lips, as in a smile.

---

*The use of the slashes here is to distinguish phonemic transcriptions from orthographic.

Lorma and Kpelle have a definite suffix -i which when added to a word ending in a front vowel produces something like the glided vowels discussed above. This gives an opportunity to hear the glided and nonglided as contrastive forms.

Lorma	indefinite	definite
porcupine	píví	pívíí
road	pélé	péléí
house	pɛ́lɛ́	pɛ́lɛ́í

/ɛ/ ("open e") bed, lead, red, better

The English sound is virtually identical to the corresponding Mande sound.

/æ/ ("diagraph") bath, laugh

This sound does not occur in the Mande languages, but has been included in the list, because of the potential confusion between the written (orthographic) a of English and the phonemic /a/ (see 3 below).

2.2 The back, rounded vowels:

/u/ school, pool, tube, coo

This vowel, like the English iy is glided, but this time with the semivowel /w/ rather than /y/. Thus the above words are rendered phonetically as /skuwl/, puwl, tuwb, kuw/.

/o/ ("closed o") go, row, tone, toe

Like the vowel /ey/ this vowel is heavily glided. Again if you say these words slowly, you will note the presence of a w semivowel following the vowel nucleus (e.g., /gow, row, town and tow/.

/ɔ/ ("open o") caught, law, frog, log

This vowel is quite similar in sound and production to the underlined English vowels to the left. The only problem being that the ɔ sound does not exist in some dialects of American English. If, for example, when you say the words caught and cot the same way, or cannot hear any appreciable difference between them you are going to have to learn to hear and produce this contrast. Secondly, speakers from different regions do not agree on which English words have this open o sound. For some, words such as frog, log, hog, and so forth are pronounced with an a vowel, while for others they are pronounced with an open o.

2.3 The back (or central) unrounded vowels:

/ɨ/ ("barred i") just (see comments)

This is not a contrastive sound in English but occurs as a variant of the general unstressed vowel known as schwa, /ə/. Therefore it is roughly the equivalent of the second vowel in muffin or in the word just when unstressed.

/ɨ/ appears as a variant of the corresponding front vowel /i/ in Kpelle and southwestern dialects or Lorma, particularly following velar consonants (see below) which because they are articulated with the tongue back tend to draw the front vowel back.

Kpelle (ŋiliŋ/ = [ŋɨlɨŋ] 'bugabug'. (Square brackets are used to mark variant pronunciations). The Lorma u, particularly the word su 'in' is sometimes pronounced with this variant, e.g. sɨ.

/ë/ none

/ë/ is the higher mid equivalent of barred ɨ. It appears as a variant of /e/ in Kpelle and Lorma, particularly following velar consonants. (k, g, ɣ, ŋ). For a definition of "Velar" see section D2.1. Kpelle: /Kele/ = [Këlë]

/ʌ/ ("carrat") but, cut, put, hut

This vowel is found in some but not all English words written with a short u, (note the pronunciation of put, which has an oo sound rendered phonetically as a lax u written but not described here.

Like the two back unrounded vowels ʌ is also a variant of the corresponding front vowel ɛ in Kpelle and Lorma, particularly following velars. Kpelle: /kɛlɛ/ = [kʌlʌ]

/a/ hot, lot, hopper

This is the only low vowel in Mande, and should cause little difficulty to the speaker of English other than the tendency to confuse it with the written (orthographic) a which as we pointed out earlier is pronounced as /æ/.

3. Diphthongs

Diphthongs are sequences of a vowel and a semivowel which tend to act as a single unit. We have already mentioned the diphthongs /iy, ey, uw and ow/ above. In addition, English has the diphthongs /ay/ as in sky, tie and light, /aw/ as in cow and now, /oy/ as in boy, toy and noise. These sounds do not occur in the Mande languages. However, the sequences /ii, ei, ɛi and we now add/ai/ are found in some of the Mande languages but because i acts as a full vowel and not a nonsyllabic semivowel, these are generally not considered diphthongs.

4. Orthographic Conventions

As mentioned earlier the phonemic writing system is not in wide use for the writing of Liberian languages. For example personal names and locations have been rendered in standard English orthography. Becuase of the inadequacies of the English orthography to render certain Africa sounds, a number of conventions have been developed. These are given as follows:

Convention	Phonimic Value	Comments/Examples
ie	/i/	Bodegie = /Bodɛgi/
ue	/u/	Bague = /Bagu/
eh	/ɛ/	Zleh Town = /Zlɛ taW̃/
ea*	/ɛ/	Salayea = /Salayɛ/
or	/ɔ/	Zorzor = /Zɔzɔo/ Lorma /Lɔɔma/

*This seems to be a Lorma/Kpelle convention only.

5. Nasalized Vowels

A nasalized vowel is a vowel in which some sound is allowed to escape through the nose (nasal cavity) as well as the mouth (oral cavity). While nasal vowels exist in English they are noncontrastive variants of oral vowels usually derived form the nasalization of an adjacent nasal consonant spilling onto the vowel, as such words as moon, [mũwn]; soon [sũwn]; and can't [kæ̃æ̃t] illustrate. Nasalization is marked by placing a tilde /~/ over the vowel. In the Mande languages, nasalization is contrastive...especially in Kpelle.

6. Vowel Length

Mande languages have contrastive vowel length. That is some syllables may be longer in duration than others. This difference can signal a difference in meaning as in the following Lorma examples:

kálíí ...... hoe   káálíí ...... snake

máságìì .... chief   mááságìì .... corn

D. LEARNING MANDE CONSONANTS

1. Classification

In addition to the vowels, which form the nucleus of most syllables, are the consonants. They are so called because they "sound with" the vowel and are accordingly found on either side of the vowel. While it is common to find consonants on either end of the English syllable, s t r e n g th, consonants in Mande tend to appear before rather than after the vowels. In other words, Mande syllables tend to be "open" (an open syllable is one in which no consonants follow the vowel, e.g., pε, lε, kpɔ). The one exception to this is the velar nasal /ŋ/ in Kpelle. Some open syllables cause trouble for English speakers, because the sound ε does not occur in English open syllables. (This is the reason for the development of ea and eh as a way of writing /ε/: see section C.)

Furthermore, Mande allows very few consonant clusters in a syllable initial position (before the vowel). These clusters only involve /l/, (as in /Flomo/ 'personal name' and as in /kwele/ 'big.'

The consonants of the Mande languages are given in tabular form below:

	Labial	Dental	Palatal	Velar	Labio Velar
STOPS: Voiceless	p	t	č	k	kp
Voiced	b	d	ǰ	g	
IMPLOSIVES:	ɓ	ɗ			gɓ
FRICATIVES: Voiceless	f	s	š		
Voiced	β V	z	ž	ɣ	
NASALS:	m	n	ñ	ŋ	ŋm
LIQUIDS:		l,r			
SEMI VOWELS:			y		w

These sounds have been arranged in such a way that the rows and columns contain similar classes of sounds. For example, it was pointed out in the preceeding section that the front vowels (/i, e and ɛ/) were often backed (converted to ɨ, ë and ʌ respectively) or that vowels tended to be nasalized following a nasal consonant. These terms, of course do not have to be learned, though they may be useful in helping you understand the pronunciation of these sounds.

2. Points of Articulation

Part of the production of a consonant involves either the complete or partial obstruction of the flow of air in the oral cavity. This is accomplished through bringing an articulator, lower lip, or the front, mid or back of the tongue into proximity with a point of articulation associated with the upper part of the mouth. These points of articulation are discussed below. Individual sounds will be discussed later.

2.1 Labial:

The term labial means "pertaining to the lips." There are two types of possible labial articulation: bilabial (both lips) /p, ɓ, and β/ and labial dental (lower lip and upper teeth) /f, and v/.

2.2 Dental:

Dental articulations involve moving the front part of the tongue behind the upper teeth as in /t, d, s, z, n, r and l/.

2.3 Palatal:

While these sounds are rare in Mande languages they do occur. They are produced by bringing the mid part of the tongue in the hard palate region as in /č, ǰ, ď, ž, ñ and y/.

2.4 Velar:

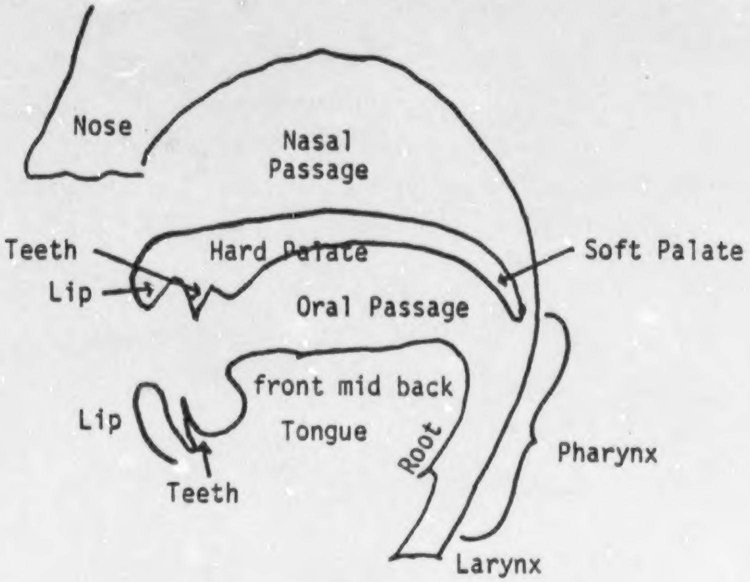
This sound is produced by raising the back of the tongue to the region of the soft palate as in /k, ɡ, ɣ, ŋ./

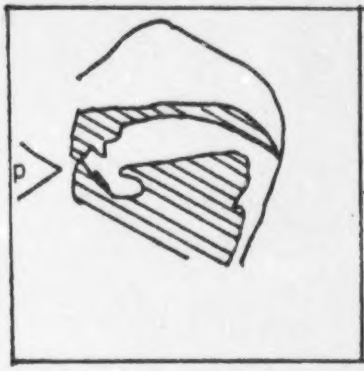
2.5 Labio-Velar:

This sound is the most difficult sound for speakers of English to master. First it involves the simultaneous articulation of a labial and a velar. It is as though you were trying to say cookpot or lugbolt but with open syllables (e.g. coo-kpot and lu-gbolt). Secondly, these sounds are often pronounced with ingressive air (the air moves into the mouth during the first moments of articulation before it is followed by egressive air from the lungs (the normal mode). This implosion is more typical of gb than kp.

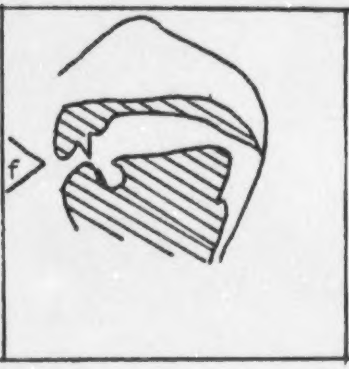
3. Picturing the Points of Articulation.

The following cross sections of the human vocal apparatus may prove useful in understanding how the various points of articulation are located.

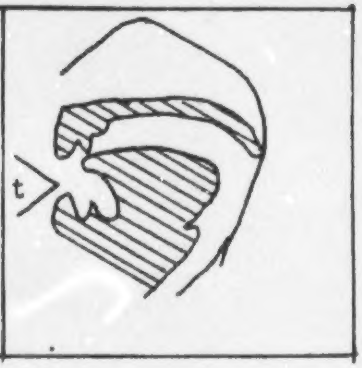

Nose
Nasal Passage
Teeth
Hard Palate
Soft Palate
Lip
Oral Passage
front mid back
Lip
Tongue
Root
Pharynx
Teeth
Larynx



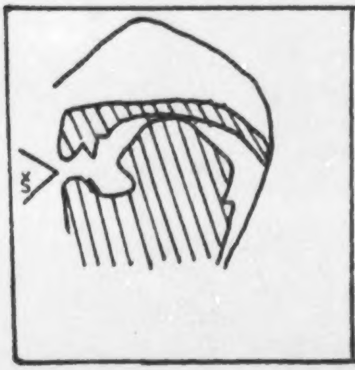
Bilabial Stop



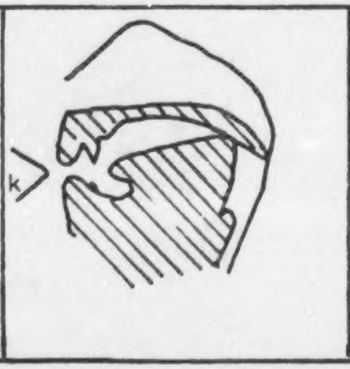
Labial-Dental



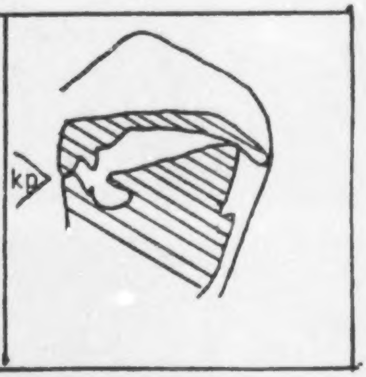
Dental



Palatal



Velar



Labio-Velar

4. Manner of Articulation

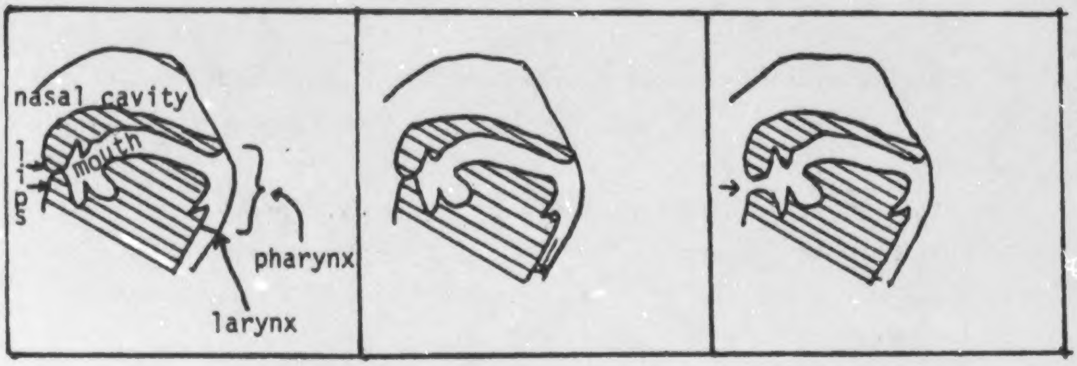
Sounds can also be classified by how they are produced at the point of articulation. This is called the manner of articulation.

4.1 Obstruents:

Obstruents are sounds which involve a radical obstruction of the air stream, either complete blockage as in stops or partial blockage as in fricatives. Obstruents may be either voiced or voiceless which means that the vocal cords are either vibrating or not respectively. You can detect the difference between voicing and nonvoicing either by putting your fingers on your larynx (Adam's apple) or in your ears while you are saying these sounds. You will no doubt notice that in English, the fricatives /f/ and /z/ are more heavily voiced than the stops /b, d and g/. This is because in English, the voiceless stops /p, t, and k/ are heavily aspirated. This means that they are followed by a puff of air (capable of blowing out a candle) which devoices the beginning of the following vowel. Because the aspiration also serves to distinguish English voiceless vowels, the voicing distinction is not crucial. Fortunately for English speakers, the voiceless obstruents of Mande are also aspirated, though not as heavily. The two sounds /č/ and /ǰ/ listed as palatal stops in the previous illustration are actually affricates. This means that phonetically they consist of a stop followed by a fricative [tš] and [dž] respectively. However because they function as a unit, they are given the unitary symbols /č/ and /ǰ/.

4.2 Implosives:

The normal manner of articulation involves the use of (egressive) air coming from the lungs. In the articulation of implosives, air is drawn into the mouth by creating a partial vacuum in the pharynx by first closing it off at either end by making a velar, dental or labial stop at one end and a gluttal stop (closing the larynx) at the other end. Then the pharynx is stretched by lowering the larynx and in so doing creating a partial vacuum in the pharynx. Thus when the stop is articulated, for a brief moment, air will rush into the mouth briefly giving it its distinctive sound before the egressive air from the lung resumes.



closure lowering release

The remaining set of consonants, the nasals, semi-consonants and semivowels are all voiced. Nasals can best be defined as voiced stops with the added feature of the opening up of the nasal passage.

The semi-consonants and the semivowels are like the nasals are resonant which means that there is less obstruction of the air stream than in the case of the stops and fricatives (known collectively as obstruents). The lack of obstruction allows the vocal tract to resonate giving the nasals, semi-consonants and semivowels their distinctive acoustical character.

Unlike the nasals where the resonance is produced in the nasal cavity, the resonance of the semi-segments is produced in the oral cavity. Semi-consonants are distinguished from semivowels in that semi-consonants are considered less obstructed or weakened consonants while the semivowels are considered more obstructed than true vowels.

4.3 Sonorants:

The remaining sets of consonants are called sonorant becuase in addition to having an oral obstruction of some sort they also have resonance. For example in the nasals, the way is opened for sound to move into the nasal cavity which is a resonant chamber. In the case of the liquid l, the air is permitted to escape around the sides of the tongue producing resonance. And finally, in the case of the semivowels /y/ and /w/ which are nonsyllabic vowels, (i and u respectively) the resonance is merely dampened. Sonorants, which also include all the vowels are generally voiced. All sonorants have the capacity to be syllabic. As pointed out above the syllabic equivalents of /y/ and /w/ are /i/ and /u/ respectively. Other syllabic sonorants can be marked by placing an apostrophe directly under the segment. In the Mande languages nasals are often syllabic as in Kpelle: ḿ̩búlú, Bande: ǹ̩dàmbángí. Lorma once had these sounds but they have since been lost.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

Much of what was presented here was quite technical and beyond what you really need to know to learn a Mande language. Yet it was presented for a number of reasons:

(1) it may help you to better understand how the consonant system of a language is structured

(2) that Mande languages are an interesting and fruitful area of scientific inquiry

(3) and because we thought you'd like to know.

E. MANDE SUPRASEGMENTALS

1. Classifications

In addition to consonants and vowels, a syllable may also posses a number of characteristic features called suprasegmentals. They are so called because their distinctiveness may transcend a single segment.

Features often considered to be suprasegmental are stress or syllable prominance, tone, vowel length and nasalization. Vowel length and nasalization have been presented in the section on vowels.

2. Stress

While stress is generally non-contrastive in Mande it is generally distinctive. In Kpelle, it falls on the first high-toned syllable in the word, or if the word has no high tones, it falls on the first syllable. Stress is acoustically marked by an increase in the loudness of the syllable and is often accompanied by a slight increase in the length of the syllable.

3. Tone

Tone in Mande is characterized by relative pitch. That is a high tone is relatively higher in pitch than a low tone and vice versa. No Mande language has more than three distinctive pitch levels. Kpelle and Mano have three: high, mid and low, while Lorma and Manya have two. The following contrasts are from Kpelle:

high	pɛ́lɛ́	'house'
mid	pɛ̄lɛ̄	'road'
low	bɛ̀lɛ̀	'trousers'

The remaining Mande languages have only two level tones, high and low. The above contrasts appear in Mende as follows:

high	pɛ́lɛ́	'house'
low high	pèlé	'road
low	bɛ̀lɛ̀	'trousers'

In Lorma due to some historical change, the tones of the above words are high, though the different words to exert an influence on the following word as the following examples show.

pɛ́lɛ́	'house'	pɛ́lɛ́nììnɛ̀	'new house'
pélé	'road'	péléníínɛ́	'new road'
bɛ́lɛ́	'trousers'	bɛ́lɛ́niinɛ́	'new trousers'

3.1 Contour Tones

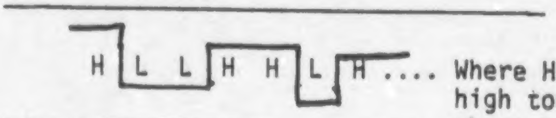
Contour tones are tones that actually rise or fall, rather than remain at the same pitch throughout the syllable. When these tones appear on a single syllable, they are written as follows:

falling	V̂	Kpelle:	ɓû	'owl'	Mende:	mbû	'owl'
rising	V̌	Kpelle:	mɔ̄lɔ̌ŋà	'rice'	Mende:	mbǎ	'rice'

Rising tones and falling tones are heard in Lorma as sentence level intonations. A comma or a question mark following a low tone will produce a rising tone. A period following a high tone will produce a falling tone. Since this is not a property of the word, and since the tonal influence is really marked by the punctuations, these rising and falling tones are not otherwise marked.

3.2 Down-Drift and Down-Step

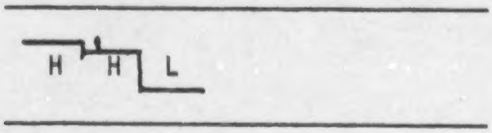
In most Mande languages there is some downdrift and downstep. Downdrift is a general condition where a high tone following a string of one or more low tones is not as high in absolute pitch as the high tone preceding the low tone. Graphically this condition can be shown as follows:



Where H represents a high toned syllable and where L represents a low toned syllable.

3.3 Downstep

Downstep is very much like downdrift except here the lowered high follows a high tone directly. It is as though the intervening low tones were lost. Downstepped high tones are marked with an apostrophy before the high-toned syllable as in the following graphic example:



Downstep is not found in Lorma and has only a limited distribution in Kpelle where it occurs only at the end of sentences.

4. Word Types

Although not strictly speaking suprasegmental, it is worth mentioning that Mande words have definite phonological shapes. As mentioned earlier Mande syllables tend to be open and preceded by a single consonant. Such a syllable structure can be represented as CV where consonants are represented by the symbol C and vowels by V.

Pronouns, postpositions and verbal particals tend to be monosyllabic while nouns and verbs tend to be bisyllabic; words containing more than two syllables are either borrowings or morphologically complex (composed of more than one word). Given these facts, the learner can say a lot about the nature of the word simply on the basis of its phonological shape.

F. LISTENING AND TRANSCRIPTION EXERCISES

The following exercises have been recorded on tape. They are constructed in such a way that you may either do them orally, by covering up the answer with a card, or you may practice writing down the answers either in the space provided, or preferably on a sheet of scratch paper. Please note, that while these exercises will give you a general ability to recognize and transcribe these sounds you will find that additional work will be necessary with your target language before you can hear them clearly.

The Vowels

1. e vrs ey (If the vowel is glided write /ey/ while if it is not, write /e/.

1.	______________	ey
2.	______________	e
3.	______________	e
4.	______________	ey
5.	b t	bet
6.	b t	beyt
7.	f l	feyl
8.	f l	fel
9.	p n	peyn
10.	p n	pen
11.	s m	sem
12.	s m	seym
13.	l	le
14.	l.	ley
15.	s s	sesey
16.	t l	teyle
17.	m m	meme
18.	k t	kete
19.	s	sey
20.	s	se

2. i vrs e

1. ____________ i
2. ____________ e
3. ____________ e
4. ____________ i
5. ___s________ si
6. ___s________ se
7. ___t________ te
8. ___t________ te
9. ___t________ ti
10. ___l________ le
11. ___l________ li
12. ___p___l____ pele
13. ___p___l____ pili
14. ___p___z____ pize
15. ___p___z____ pizi
16. ___f___l____ fili
17. ___f___l____ feli
18. ___f___l____ file
19. ___l___p____ lepe
20. ___l___l____ lili

3. e vrs ɛ vrs i

1. ____________ e
2. ____________ e
3. ____________ ɛ
4. ____________ e
5. ____________ i
6. ____________ e
7. ____________ ɛ
8. ___s________ se
9. ___s________ sɛ
10. ___s________ si
11. ___p___l____ pɛlɛ
12. ___p___l____ pele
13. ___p___l____ pili
14. ___p___l____ pile
15. ___p___l____ peli
16. ___p___l____ pɛlɛ
17. ___s___l____ selei
18. ___t___l____ tɛlɛi
19. ___t___l____ tilɛ
20. ___p___l____ pɛle

4. o vrs ow

1. ________ o
2. ________ ow
3. ________ ow
4. ________ o
5. __g______ go
6. __g______ gow
7. __s______ sow
8. __s______ so
9. ___t______ tow
10. ___t______ to
11. __t__n____ town
12. __t_______ to
13. __f__l____ folo
14. __f__l____ folow
15. __k__l____ kolo
16. __k__l____ kolei
17. __k_______ koo
18. __k_______ kow
19. __m__l____ molo
20. __b__n____ bono

5. o vrs u

1. ________ o
2. ________ u
3. ________ o
4. ________ o
5. ________ u
6. __g______ go
7. __l______ lo
8. __l______ lu
9. __t__l____ tolo
10. __p__l____ pulu
11. __f__l__m__ folomo
12. __g__l____ gulu
13. __g__l____ gulo
14. __k__l____ kolo
15. __k__l____ kolu
16. __m__l____ mulu
17. __m__l____ molu
18. __n__w____ nowo
19. __n__w____ nowu
20. __t_______ too

6. o vrs ɔ vrs

1. ____________ o
2. ____________ ɔ
3. ____________ ɔ
4. ____________ o
5. ____________ o
6. ____________ ɔ
7. __t_________ tɔ
8. __t_________ to
9. __g_________ go
10. __g_________ gɔ
11. __g___l______ gɔlɔ
12. __k___l______ kɔlɔ
13. __k___l______ kolo
14. __g___l______ gulu
15. __g___l______ gɔlɔ
16. __t___l______ tɔlo
17. __t___l______ tulo
18. __t___l______ tolu
19. __p___l______ pɔlu
20. __p___l______ polu

7. a vrs ɔ

1. ____________ a
2. ____________ ɔ
3. ____________ a
4. ____________ ɔ
5. __p_________ pa
6. __p_________ pɔ
7. __p___l______ pɔlɔ
8. __p___l______ pala
9. __t___l______ tɔla
10. __t___l______ talɔ
11. __t___l______ talai
12. __p___l______ pɔlɔi
13. __p___l______ pɔlu
14. __p___l______ palu
15. __p___l______ palo
16. __p___l______ pola
17. __p___l______ pɔla
18. __p___l______ palɔ
19. __k___p______ kɔpɔ
20. __k___p______ kapa

8. ∧ vrs a vrs ë

1. __________ a
2. __________ ∧
3. __________ a
4. __________ a
5. b __________ ba
6. b __________ b∧
7. b l __________ bala
8. b l __________ b∧l∧
9. p l __________ pala
10. p l __________ p∧lu
11. t l __________ tala
12. t l __________ t∧le
13. t l __________ tëlë
14. g l __________ g∧l∧
15. g l __________ gëlë
16. g l __________ gala
17. p __________ pa
18. p __________ pë
19. p __________ p∧
20. p __________ pë

9. ∧ vrs ë vrs ɨ

1. __________ b∧
2. __________ bë
3. __________ bɨ
4. __________ gɨ
5. __________ gë
6. __________ gë
7. __________ s∧
8. __________ së
9. __________ së
10. __________ sɨ
11. __________ kɨ
12. __________ k∧
13. __________ kɨ
14. __________ kë
15. __________ fë
16. __________ fɨ
17. __________ f∧
18. __________ fa
19. __________ fë
20. __________ tɨ

10. ʌ vrs ë vrs ɨ vrs e vrs ɛ

1. ______________ tɛlɛ
2. ______________ tʌlʌ
3. ______________ gele
4. ______________ gële
5. ______________ kili
6. ______________ kɨlɨ
7. ______________ kele
8. ______________ këlë
9. ______________ kʌlʌ
10. ______________ kɛlɛ
11. ______________ mʌ
12. ______________ mɛ
13. ______________ mi
14. ______________ mɨ
15. ______________ bë
16. ______________ ti
17. ______________ sʌ
18. ______________ fɨ
19. ______________ fɛ
20. ______________ gë

Mande Consonants

The following consonants should give you little difficulty and for that reason no drills are given: p, t, k, b, d, g, f, v, s, z, m, n, l, y and w.

11. kp vrs p vrs k

1. ______________ ka
2. ______________ pa
3. ______________ kpa
4. ______________ kpa
5. ______________ ka
6. ______________ pa
7. ______________ kpɛ
8. ______________ kɛ
9. ______________ pɛ
10. ______________ kpɛ
11. ______________ kpaka
12. ______________ pakpa
13. ______________ kapa
14. ______________ kpapa
15. ______________ kpiki
16. ______________ pike
17. ______________ kpolo
18. ______________ kulu
19. ______________ pulu
20. ______________ kpekpe

12. gb vrs g vrs b vrs kp

1. ______________ ba
2. ______________ ga
3. ______________ gɓa
4. ______________ gɓa
5. ______________ gɓɛ
6. ______________ bɛ
7. ______________ bɛ
8. ______________ gɛ
9. ______________ gu
10. ______________ bu
11. ______________ gɓu
12. ______________ bulu
13. ______________ gulu
14. ______________ gɓulu
15. ______________ saba
16. ______________ sagɓa
17. ______________ saga
18. ______________ taba
19. ______________ tokpo
20. ______________ tɔkpɔ

13. gb vrs b vrs ɓ vrs g vrs kp

1. ______________ ga
2. ______________ gɓa
3. ______________ ɓa
4. ______________ gɓa
5. ______________ ɓa
6. ______________ ba
7. ______________ ɓɛ
8. ______________ bɛ
9. ______________ bɛ
10. ______________ ɓɛ
11. ______________ ɓo
12. ______________ gbo
13. ______________ kpolɨ
14. ______________ ɓolɨ
15. ______________ bulɨ
16. ______________ gɓulɨ
17. ______________ ɓulɨ
18. ______________ kpulɨ
19. ______________ pulɨ
20. ______________ ɓaɓa

14. d vrs d (Kpelle only)

1. ______________ di
2. ______________ ɗi
3. ______________ ɗo
4. ______________ ɗu
5. ______________ du
6. ______________ dolo
7. ______________ dolo
8. ______________ tolo
9. ______________ dili
10. ______________ ɗili

15. mb, nd, nj, ŋg, ngb

1. ______________ ba
2. ______________ mba
3. ______________ de
4. ______________ nde
5. ______________ ye
6. ______________ nje
7. ______________ gu
8. ______________ ngu
9. ______________ gɓa
10. ______________ ngbu
11. ______________ mbi
12. ______________ ndi
13. ______________ ngi
14. ______________ ngbu
15. ______________ nji
16. ______________ banja
17. ______________ tanda
18. ______________ sungɔ
19. ______________ wundɔ
20. ______________ samba

16. p vrs β vrs v vrs f

1. ____________ pa
2. ____________ fa
3. ____________ va
4. ____________ fa
5. ____________ va
6. ____________ βa
7. ____________ fa
8. ____________ va
9. ____________ va
10. ____________ βa
11. ____________ βi
12. ____________ vi
13. ____________ vili
14. ____________ βili
15. ____________ fili
16. ____________ βulu
17. ____________ vulu
18. ____________ fɔlɔ
19. ____________ βɔlɔ
20. ____________ vɔlɔ

17. š vrs ž vrs č vrs ǰ

1. ____________ sa
2. ____________ ča
3. ____________ sa
4. ____________ či
5. ____________ ǰi
6. ____________ ǰe
7. ____________ že
8. ____________ še
9. ____________ se
10. ____________ še
11. ____________ zowo
12. ____________ žowo
13. ____________ sii
14. ____________ šii
15. ____________ čii
16. ____________ kpaza
17. ____________ masa
18. ____________ tiča
19. ____________ baǰi
20. ____________ žošo

18. ɣ vrs g

1. ______________ ga
2. ______________ ga
3. ______________ ɣa
4. ______________ ɣa
5. ______________ ɣi
6. ______________ ɣu
7. ______________ gu
8. ______________ ɣu
9. ______________ ɣe
10. ______________ ɣɔ
11. ______________ saɣa
12. ______________ gaɣa
13. ______________ ɣili
14. ______________ gili
15. ______________ ɣale
16. ______________ ɣale
17. ______________ paɣa
18. ______________ paga
19. ______________ paɣɔ
20. ______________ pagɔ

Suprasegmental Drills

19. Long vrs Short Vowels

1. ______________ babaa
2. ______________ baaba
3. ______________ sasasaa
4. ______________ saasasa
5. ______________ sasaasaa
6. ______________ sɔɔla
7. ______________ teveea
8. ______________ masagii
9. ______________ fiibɛɛ
10. ______________ saagɔ
11. ______________ tilaa
12. ______________ tiilaa
13. ______________ tasaata
14. ______________ kpaasagii
15. ______________ mukulu
16. ______________ maanɛɛvɛ
17. ______________ niinɛi
18. ______________ bɔvɛlaale
19. ______________ kooligii
20. ______________ pagɔ

20. Nasalized vrs Oral Vowels

1. __________ ba
2. __________ bã
3. __________ babã
4. __________ bãba
5. __________ lamãã
6. __________ lamaa
7. __________ lãmaa
8. __________ lamaa
9. __________ tɔlĩlĩ
10. __________ tutita
11. __________ kãlã
12. __________ kala
13. __________ põõ
14. __________ pɛ̃ɛ̃soe
15. __________ mãdigo
16. __________ sɔ̃ɔ̃ti
17. __________ wĩĩgii
18. __________ pɔkɔpa
19. __________ pivugii
20. __________ mũlũba

21. High Tone vrs Low Tone

1. __________ bábá
2. __________ bábà
3. __________ bàbá
4. __________ bàbà
5. __________ bábà
6. __________ títí
7. __________ tìtì
8. __________ kǔlú
9. __________ kúlù
10. __________ kúlú
11. __________ tátàtá
12. __________ tátátà
13. __________ tàtátá
14. __________ tàtátà
15. __________ tàtàtà
16. __________ kákátá
17. __________ tákákà
18. __________ màmámá
19. __________ màmámà
20. __________ kúlùkú

22. High Tone, Low Tone and Downstep

1. __________ bábá
2. __________ bábà
3. __________ báꜜbá
4. __________ bábàꜜbá
5. __________ bábàbá
6. __________ kòꜜkókó
7. __________ kòꜜkóꜜkó
8. __________ kúꜜlúlù
9. __________ fúlúꜜfú
10. __________ pùlìgì
11. __________ tàꜜtátá
12. __________ tàtatà
13. __________ tátátá
14. __________ tátáꜜtá
15. __________ táꜜtáta
16. __________ kákaꜜtà
17. __________ tákàꜜtá
18. __________ málálá
19. __________ gáꜜlíꜜgá
20. __________ púꜜlúlúꜜlú

23. High, Low, Rising, Falling

1. __________ bábà
2. __________ bábâ
3. __________ bábá
4. __________ bàbá
5. __________ bàbǎ
6. __________ bàbâ
7. __________ bâbà
8. __________ bábà
9. __________ bǎbá
10. __________ bǎbǎ
11. __________ tátátâ
12. __________ tátâtà
13. __________ tâtàtà
14. __________ tàtàtǎ
15. __________ tǎtátá
16. __________ tàtǎá
17. __________ táàtá
18. __________ tàtàá
19. __________ tátàà
20. __________ tàátàá